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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents descriptions of 19 reading programs that encourage Indiana middle-grade students to read. The programs described in the booklet were part of the Middle Grades Reading Network and were funded with competitive $5000 "minigrants." Essays (descriptions of the reading programs) in the booklet are: "Building a Community of Readers: Reading, Sharing, and Learning" (Susan Nowlin and Helen Holingsworth); "Reading Is Our Priority" (Deborah Du Four Bova and Kathleen Hurley); "A Tale of Three Students" (Lois Overton); "Bag of Book Tricks" (Mary Lue Binning); "Read-Ins: Colts in Action" (Eugenia Sacopulos); "The East Side 500: Race to Read--Read to Win!" (Kathryn Carmody); "Students Promote Their Own Literacy" (Ronald Bush); "Multicultural Awareness through Reading" (Artis Hoffman and Virginia Mankin Lake); "Hooked on Reading" (Sue Layman and Steve Spradley); "S.T.A.R.S.--Students Treasure All Reading Success" (Mary Ann Wildman); "Reading for Fun" (Beth Schulte); "Role Models Increase Student Reading" (Beth Bedsworth); "Reading Lasts a Lifetime" (J. Ronald Hughes); "Reading: The First Piece of the Puzzle" (Eden Kuhlenschmidt); "My Kingdom for a Book!" (Linda Stalker); "Reading across the Ages" (Rebecca McElroy and others); "Formula for Creating and Feeding a Growing Reading Monster!" (Vickie Thomas and others); "EAGER Readers" (Ginny Reeves); and "Readers Are Winners" (Diana Tice). The booklet concludes with a map indicating the locations of the 19 minigrant-funded programs. (RS)

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The Best of the Network 1993

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MIDDLE GRADES READING NETWORK

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The Best of the Network 1993

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Building a Community of Readers: Reading, Sharing, and Learning	2
Reading Is Our Priority	4
A Tale of Three Students	6
Bag of Book Tricks	8
Read-Ins: Colts in Action	10
The East Side 500: Race to Read--Read to Win!	12
Students Promote Their Own Literacy	14
Multicultural Awareness Through Reading	16
Hooked on Reading	18
S.T.A.R.S.--Students Treasure All Reading Success	20
Reading for Fun	22
Role Models Increase Student Reading	24
Reading Lasts a Lifetime	26
Reading: The First Piece of the Puzzle	28
My Kingdom for a Book!	30
Reading Across the Ages	32
Formula for Creating and Feeding a Growing Reading Monster!	34
EAGER Readers	36
Readers Are Winners	38
Minigrant Site Map	40

Introduction

In the spring of 1992, Middle Grades Reading Network schools received a Request for Proposal for the Minigrants Program. They submitted proposals by June of that year, and outside reviewers selected projects and made suggestions to strengthen them. We provided technical assistance, schools revised proposals, and we awarded grants in January 1993.

Rather than focus on one teacher and one classroom, the grants provided the funding to revitalize reading opportunities for most of the schools' students. While a grant of $5,000 is a large amount for such purposes, its aim was not to provide books needed for libraries and classrooms. That is far beyond the capacity of a minigrant. We hope that schools themselves will allocate the funds necessary to restore and maintain school library media center book collections. Instead, schools used the money to develop a lasting reading project through careful and thoughtful use of all the resources of their schools and communities.

Teams of teachers, library media specialists, parents, and public librarians provided an extraordinary wealth of expertise both in preparing for and conducting the projects. Together they produced an astonishing variety and range of programs that blend to create one general impression: Indiana's middle grades students will read when provided with meaningful reading opportunities.

We are grateful to Brian O'Neill in preparing **The Best of the Network**. He coached the project directors and helped them tell the story of their superb projects. We are especially proud of the project directors whose dedication, interest, and enthusiasm led to the outstanding projects that they have described in their articles. While the beginnings of their projects are invisible, the endings are manifest. We expect that the ideas from the projects will provide a catalyst for other schools as they develop their own plans to build communities of readers.

Jack W. Humphrey, Director
Middle Grades Reading Network

Lora L. Batchelor Middle School

Sharing favorite books through book talks.

Building a Community of Readers: Reading, Sharing, and Learning

Susan Nowlin, English Teacher **Helen Hollingsworth**, Writing Skills Teacher

"Let's work on becoming a community of readers," said Susan.

"Great! How can we do it? How about having authors come and talk to our students?" volunteered Cathy.

"I like the idea of having more books in my classroom for students to select and read independently," said Sheila.

Brenda said, "It might be a good idea to find out what they are interested in reading."

"I'd like to work on a survey," Susan said. "I've got some ideas for some things that would help us if we knew more about students' reading habits."

"How about getting the media specialist, counselors, and special education teachers involved? Counselors and students could read, and counselors could come into classes to discuss some serious themes, such as child abuse and racial discrimination," Lois suggested.

Kay said, "I've been wanting to form a group of readers into a special club in the media center after school. This will be the perfect time."

"I heard a great speaker this summer who said middle school students who read a million words a year are academically OK. Let's begin a Million Word Club," said Helen.

"Let's continue to get parents involved in sharing books with their children and continue our book sharing for ourselves," Sharon suggested.

Mary said, "I went to a super workshop last summer with Betty. We have some great activities to share, such as partner-reads, book talks, reading journals, and read-alouds. We are excited and eager to try these out."

Susan said, "I want to try reading logs this year. I think students will feel a great sense of accomplishment when they see how much they've read. I'm curious to see if it will make a difference."

The Middle Grades Reading Network minigrant, funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc., spurred these Batchelor Middle School teachers in Bloomington, Indiana, to organize new reading incentives and experiment with new strategies for involving students in reading.

The grant provided the support on two levels: the professional level for teachers and the learning/activity level for students. Teachers received the gift of time to meet, share, plan, organize, and interact with each other and with an exciting consultant who brought enthusiasm and knowledge. For students, the grant provided support for visits by local authors, titles of adolescent literature and children's picture books for classroom libraries, book plates for new books, and tapes for creating video book talks.

The changes and enhancements are ongoing, and teachers and students are discovering some things they are excited about and some things that need to be adapted. Along the way, teachers are changing their ideas, listening more to students, and learning along with their students about what works and what doesn't. Students are more involved in reading and discriminating.

For example, teachers surveyed students about their interests in reading. The results revealed that students would read more if they could read just for fun. Students reported that they did not have enough time to read for fun at school. They dislike reading and then writing book reports. They like to hear about books, especially in book talks given by peers, and they like to share what they think about what they read; they do not like to have to write what they think.

Students revealed that they like authors who can talk about what they write and how they get ideas for their books. For example, Scott Russell Sanders, a local author of numerous fictional and nonfictional books, spent a day talking to students in groups of thirty. Sanders told students about his love of reading, his favorite authors, and the value of personal experience in writing. Students were excited to experience the presence of an author who was genuine in sharing his love of reading and writing.

The idea of the Million Word Club interested students, but they hated keeping track of how much they read. They did not want to record numbers, but they liked having a record of the books they completed. Title and a word or two of evaluation were sufficient. How many words was not as important as what the book was about. Teachers soon found that encouraging students to read and telling them why reading is important were enough. No requirements were necessary.

> The excitement and interest in reading and sharing reading are the greatest outcomes for both teachers and students.

Teachers trained in partner-reads and read-alouds experimented with these activities. The excitement and interest in reading and sharing reading are the greatest outcomes for both teachers and students. Teachers are changing their approaches to questioning and talking about books with students, moving away from textbook-type questions and written answers to more conversational, reflective discussions. Teachers are experimenting with new discussion and assessment tools that do not require written products.

The media specialist organized a reading club that meets monthly, the guidance counselor read a novel along with students and visited classrooms to discuss sensitive themes in the book, writing skills teachers helped students write and share picture books, and special education teachers joined regular education teachers in planning alternative reading selections for mainstreamed students. One of the best outcomes from the community of readers was the open communication among teachers, parents, and students about reading, sharing, and enjoying reading.

Batchelor Middle School has a population of 950 students in grades 7-8. Batchelor's district encompasses the southern half of Bloomington and Monroe County. This area includes a blend of blue-collar, white-collar, university, rural, inner-city, and transient populations running the gamut of socioeconomic strata. Batchelor Middle School is recognized for excellence in education both in the state of Indiana and nationally. Many faculty members are leaders in professional organizations affiliated with their subject areas.

Susan Nowlin

teaches eighth grade English at Batchelor Middle School. She is the English Academic Super Bowl coach and department spokesperson. She holds a master's in education from Indiana University and is certified in English in grades 5-12.

Helen Hollingsworth

teaches eighth grade writing skills at Batchelor Middle School. She is first author of ***Teaching Writing in Every Class: A Guide for Grades 6-12****, and co-director and co-author of* ***Write More, Learn More****, a K-12 writing curriculum distributed by Phi Delta Kappa in all fifty states and three foreign countries. She leads national workshops in teaching writing, integrating computers, and alternative assessment.*

Deborah Bova (left) and Kathy Hurley (right) use the Mac LC to check recent book lists which have been ordered for the Creston Junior High project.

Reading Is Our Priority

Deborah Du Four Bova, Language Arts Teacher
Kathleen Hurley, Language Arts Teacher

Deborah Du Four Bova

has taught language arts at Creston Junior High for the past ten years. Prior to that, she lead the Chapter I program at the Marion County Children's Guardian Home while instructing two sections of freshman composition at IUPUI. Teaching experiences also include kindergarten and first, second, and fourth grades. Deborah has written and received several grants, including the Lilly Creativity Fellowship and the Jon Holden DeHaan Grant. She has led workshops, developed and conducted presentations, and published articles. Currently she is involved in a professional book on process writing. Deborah is a graduate of the State University of New York and holds a master's degree from Indiana University.

Reading is our priority on Team Two in the seventh grade and Team One in the eighth grade at Creston Junior High School--a priority which was clearly enhanced by the Middle Grades Reading Network and the minigrant awarded by the Network. This year the seventh grade team sought to connect students with book resources in the community and to introduce book talk, storytelling, and readers' theater as ways to share literature. At the seventh grade level, Parents Sharing Books was to continue, Reading Workshop would still involve half of the classroom time for the entire year, and students would still earn credit for their reading. The eighth grade team planned to continue teacher read-alouds, and they targeted the following: a classroom library to be added via minigrant funds, intensified reading using the Reading for Real program, and the addition of a Homework Reading Workshop where students would add reading for credit as homework. This idea extended the seventh grade Reading Workshop notion into the home. Together, the two teams focused on establishing a liaison with the community through a PTA committee that would connect with the business groups of our area. The groups would be invited to support the creation and ongoing upgrading of classroom libraries. These libraries would rotate on a weekly basis--thus providing reading materials for students in every subject area throughout the building. The committee would be chaired and guided by a PTA parent and would tie the children, books, and the community together. The seventh grade team, lead by Mrs. Bova, and the eighth grade team, led by Ms. Hurley, embarked on a venture of shared and independent goals.

For the seventh graders in Mrs. Bova's classes, the Reading Workshop forum continued to provide access to books and time to read, yet it was augmented by a sizable addition of nonfiction material. The result was more than expected. Students immersed themselves in biographies to the point that struggles ensued over "Who gets which book when?" Plus, a selection of books dealing with invention, optical illusion, facts, trivia, and "the history of" generated intense reading. Escalated reading activity was again noted on the seventh graders' team when a collection of children's picture books was introduced to the classroom library. Readers' theater, a new experience for all of the students, expanded to include nonfiction and science. This had excellent results: students became more interested in books.

One of the shared goals focused on establishing book clubs with the seventh and eighth grade teams involved in the minigrant and then to extend these clubs to the entire school. A rather unusual twist--a variation of **The Breakfast Club** which has been dubbed "The Detention Club"--evolved. This challenge group, composed of students known to some as the "criminal element," represents a segment of the school population that is rarely reached. Our building sub was assigned to Mrs. Bova's room several times this year. He is a teacher who frequently engages in after-school detention supervision for fun and profit--and he began to bring the group of detainees to Mrs. Bova's classroom to serve their sentences. The illicit use of Room 200 was undetected by the seventh grade

team leader for many months, only coming to light one evening when she was processing new books after school. The "regulars" ran right in and grabbed several books which they fancied from the shelf; they knew where these were and what they wanted. They scurried to the rocking chairs and other preferential seating, curled up with the books, and immersed themselves in print. Inadvertently, and without real effort on her part, Mrs. Bova had reached the most reluctant group in the building--simply because the classroom was awash with books, a reading environment providing an invitation to read. Sometimes the best-laid plans go awry, and sometimes through no design of our own, a situation develops to which we must react--a sort of carpe diem, according to Mrs. Bova whose new and wonderful notion for getting kids to read is "The Detention Club." Next year she intends to add an ample comic book collection, coordinate her efforts with Mr. Johnson, the "detention man"; and perhaps take up detention supervision herself in order to engage in a bit of book talk while she's at it.

Many of the seventh grade students from Mrs. Bova's classes move on to the eighth grade team of Ms. Hurley and company, and these students are required to read for pleasure at least one hour per week. Gifted students are required to read a minimum of two hours per week. Censorship is not an issue for the teacher or the school, for Ms. Hurley operates with the philosophy that censorship is a family issue. Students have freedom to select books which are of interest to them as long as the title meets the approval of the parents who sign a weekly Homework Reading Workshop Log to verify that independent reading has occurred. Much like a practice card used by many band and orchestra directors to regulate involvement at home, the card involves parents with adolescent literature--many for the first time. It is not unusual for parents to read the same book as their child--an extension of the Parents Sharing Books idea--and engage in a dialogue about print, literature, and its connection to real-life issues.

Reading growth correlates with the amount of independent reading students do, but students at the middle level read less than most nine-year-olds because their schedules, activities, and interests limit the time they have for books. It is necessary at the middle school level to illustrate the importance of independent reading by valuing that reading experience enough to assign a grade to it. Thus, Homework Reading Workshop--like its seventh grade counterpart, Reading Workshop--constitutes an important part of the students' grades.

Funds from the Middle Grades Reading Network minigrant have been used to purchase books to create a classroom library at the eighth grade level, for unlike the seventh grade situation, Ms. Hurley's classroom was without a collection of adolescent fiction and nonfiction. Thus far, over five hundred books have been purchased. Student ownership in the library is evident; many of the titles purchased were based on student recommendations. Interest in reading soared once the classroom library opened. The eighth graders dialogue constantly about the latest and favorite books which they've read.

In addition, some funds from the minigrant have been used to purchase class sets of selected novels to be used in Ms. Hurley's Reading for Real program, which includes both teacher read-alouds and partner reading. During partner reading, two students take turns reading a novel orally and discuss important issues raised by the novel. The process of orally reading and carrying on meaningful discussion is modeled early in the school year during the teacher read-alouds, and students build on these models. The eighth grade reading is more directed than that of the seventh grade within the confines of the classroom, yet ample opportunity exists to read what one chooses via the homework program. The extensive classroom library contains books which complement the themes and issues raised by the class novel, and the discussions extend beyond the classroom to the families.

Kathleen Hurley

has taught language arts at Creston Junior High for the past twelve years. A graduate of DePauw University, Ms. Hurley received her master's from Indiana University. Her experiences were with ninth grade English students and seventh and eighth grade social studies students. In the fall of 1991, Ms. Hurley became an eighth grade language arts teacher; the following year, as team leader, she was a full-fledged member of an interdisciplinary team. Using a summer experience with Reading for Real as a starting point, Ms. Hurley shifted her approach to literature and reading at Creston Junior High. She continues to lead the eighth grade team, and her program of Homework Reading Workshop continues as a result of the Network minigrant.

Creston Junior High School is in the throes of renovation as it educates 1200 students from all socioeconomic levels. It is a school in transition--from a seventh, eighth, ninth configuration to a sixth, seventh, eighth grade middle school--an urban school in a rural setting. A Chapter I reading program, inclusion for learning disabled and emotionally handicapped students, and a gifted and talented program are woven into the three interdisciplinary teams at the seventh and eighth grade levels. Creston celebrates reading with its Parents Sharing Books program, Teachers Under Cover group, Weekly Readers (thirty-five minutes of sustained silent reading per week), and its emphasis on daily read-alouds rotated through the various disciplines. It is a school which values its diversity and its commitment to making reading a priority at the middle level.

Enthusiastic readers share their favorite books.

A Tale of Three Students

Lois Overton, Language Arts/Reading Teacher

"Do we hafta read?"--four little words that strike like daggers in the heart of even the most fearless reading teacher. Oh, how we long for a room full of students whose idea of a fun time is curling up on a cushion while they fight for their lives on a remote lake with Gary Paulsen or romp through the countryside of West Virginia with Phyllis Naylor and **Shiloh**. We want our students to "ooh" and "aah" along with us as we expound on the beauties of the written word, when the truth of the matter is that most of the adolescents in our academic world would probably rather watch HBO than read. We find that by the time students reach us in sixth grade, they are already confirmed haters of reading who have been basal-battered for so long that they would do anything to avoid reading.

At Dennis Middle School, we have found that the majority of children do not choose to read when given the opportunity. Even though students in sixth grade have weekly library instruction, few ever have an independent reading book with them in class, and for those who do, the book is often carried for a week, then returned to the library unopened and unread. Too many students are hardened nonreaders who long ago were turned off by teaching methods that required them to be good at skills they found boring, irrelevant, and inconsequential. Others have learned that reading is not a cool hobby--certainly not one that would ever rank up there with basketball. The girls can be kept reading a little longer than the boys, lured by the delights of Sweet Valley, but beyond that is a great wasteland of students who can neither name the last book they read nor tell the name of an author they enjoy reading.

In hopes of effecting a change, the sixth grade language/reading teachers at Dennis made a commitment to the following three goals: to teach reading and writing as interrelated skills, to help each child become a more discriminating reader, and to expose our students to a wide variety of good literature. With the help of a Middle Grades Reading Network grant funded through the Lilly Endowment Inc., we were able to purchase classroom sets of novels that would appeal to adolescents in the real world. We selected books on the basis of high interest, author style, and theme. We then used them to teach the same skills covered by the basal. We built English and writing lessons around the theme covered by each book.

The two hundred students with whom we worked were typical of those found in any classroom. A few were voracious readers, some were occasional readers, and a lot were reluctant readers. Val was a student

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falling into the latter category. She came into class on the first day and proclaimed in her inimitable way, "I hate reading and there's nothing you can do to get me to like it." She was unable to articulate why or how she had come to that decision; she only knew that she didn't want to read.

The first book the class read was **There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom**. When done, Val declared that she had indeed loved the book but that it was the only book she liked. The next book was **The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle**. In Val's words, "There were a few good parts, but on the whole, it was stupid." Then the class had a nonfiction read-a-thon, followed by **Canyons**, two books by Avi, **Lottery Rose**, and **James and the Giant Peach**. Each time Val finished a book, it became "the only one that's any good." When reminded of all the books she had actually liked, she admitted, "All but that Charlotte Doyle thing."

Try as she might, she can't deny that she has enjoyed reading books this year. She still proclaims herself a reading-hater, yet recently asked if she might take home a copy of **Sing Down the Moon** because another student had told her that it was a good book; she also says that reading/language arts is her favorite class. Val is now able to tell why she thinks she hates reading. She finds it difficult to keep her mind on what she is reading when she is on her own. Reading books together helps her stay on task. In her opinion, **Charlotte Doyle** was too hard and too long and dealt with a subject that didn't interest her. She knows now that it is all right not to like every book. In spite of herself, she is developing personal literary taste.

Chris was another reluctant reader. Although he could read fairly well, he had, by his own admission, been turned off to reading since third grade, beaten down by basals, workbooks, and skill sheets that left him bored and unconcerned. He reported that he simply could never get very involved with the characters or the stories. Chris is still not a student who will read everything put in front of him. He reads Gary Paulsen books and after studying sports poetry thinks he might want to look at one by Dygard or Christopher. Like Val, he is developing his own taste and learning to discriminate between what interests him and what does not. Chris has also learned that he would rather write stories than read them.

Then there was Jared. Although he lived in the Dennis area, Jared had spent five years being bussed to a school across town because he had been placed in a MiMH class. He was in special classes for everything except physical education, where he was "mainstreamed" with students at least two years his junior. Jared had not made a great deal of progress in those five years of special education, so at the annual case review, his mother and the Dennis teachers decided to try including him in the Dennis sixth grade. For the first time, he would be attending school with his neighborhood peers in heterogeneously grouped classes.

Had Jared been handed a sixth grade basal and workbook he would never have survived. In his whole language class, he was introduced to books that would interest most young adolescents. When his class read **Charlie Skedaddle**, he followed along by listening as it was read to him by his full-time aide and discussed it at his own ability level. When the class had its culminating activity--a civil war slave trek to freedom--he made his way around the underground railroad station with his friends' help and gained freedom in the "North" just as they did. When the class studied nonfiction, he studied nonfiction. Like his classmates, he wrote and illustrated a nonfiction book. The books the class authored have become part of the permanent collection of the public library in Richmond. Jared can now go to the library, find his name in the card catalog, and check out his own book. He is a real author. He is really succeeding.

Because of the Network grant, three students have been able to learn more about themselves and grow in ways that would never have been possible otherwise. Val and Chris have learned that they can actually enjoy reading. Chris has learned to be a writer. Jared may be taking smaller steps than most, but he is being successful in experiencing the real world at his own pace and with his peers. Likewise, the students around him are learning about courage in perseverance and to care about those who are different.

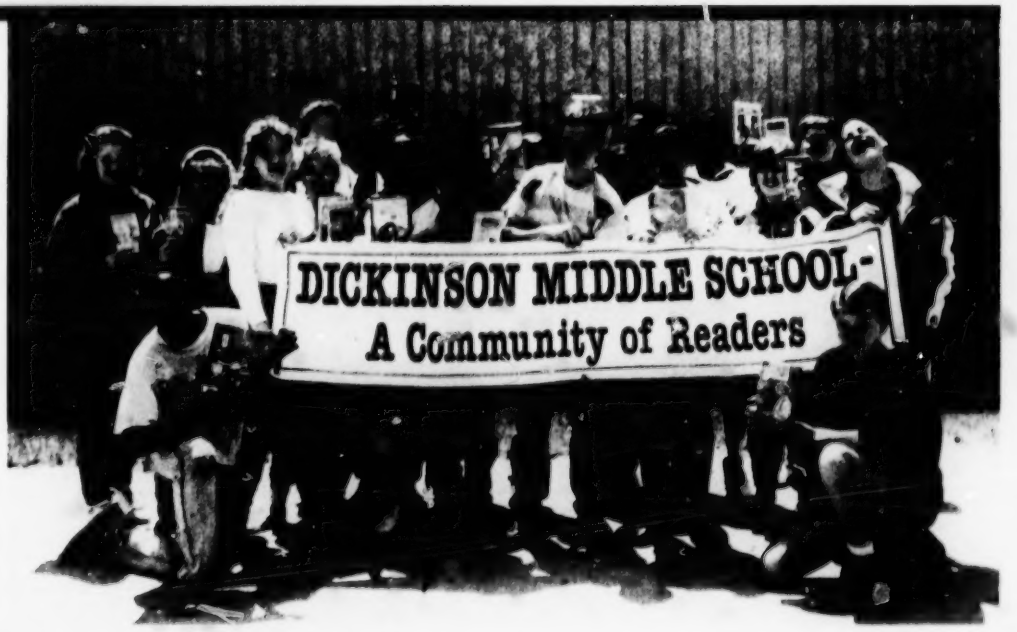
Our sixth grade is full of Vals and Chrises and Jareds--real children with real problems, varied interests, and diverse levels of success. Each one makes progress at his or her own pace, reading a few pieces of literature that involve the student for a while in a life which reflects his or her own concerns and interests.

Lois Overton

has been teaching for twenty-two years, the last seven at Dennis Middle School in Richmond, Indiana, where she teaches language arts/reading and coaches the academic team. She also teaches Adult Basic Education classes in the evening. Ms. Overton developed a program at Dennis entitled FROGS (Families Reading on Good Stuff) which promotes family reading groups. She holds degrees from Indiana University and Ball State.

Dennis Middle School serves approximately 760 students in grades 6-9 in Richmond, Indiana. Built in 1920 as one of the first junior highs in the United States, it was remodeled in 1987-1989 as a middle school. In 1989-1991 Dennis was named a Center of Excellence in English and Language Arts by the NCTE. Dennis is a leader in the use of collaborative teaching of LD students by learning disabilities specialists and teachers within heterogeneous classrooms.

Jesse Dickinson Middle School



Dickinson Middle School students READ.

Bag of Book Tricks

Mary Lue Binning, Media Specialist

Everyone loves to read at Dickinson Middle School in South Bend, Indiana. Books are everywhere. Students, staff, and parents choose to read for personal enjoyment at every opportunity. This is a wonderful fantasy, but unfortunately it was not a reality at our school in the fall of 1991. We had hopes and dreams and needed a way to make our "druthers" come true.

We conducted the **Literacy Assessment for the Middle Grades** during the 1991-1992 school year in conjunction with the Center for Early Adolescence from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Every member of the faculty and support staff was interviewed. Each classroom and the library were visited and observed. Also, representative students and parents went through the interview process. The assessment team's goal was to investigate current practices and policies to determine how Dickinson Middle School was responding to adolescent literacy needs. Goals, objectives, and strategies were written after the data had been compiled and analyzed. From this process it was evident that we needed a shared vision between the constituencies on the importance of reading across the curriculum, throughout the school, and into the homes.

In order to "grab" our faculty and begin to bring them on board, we designed a literacy T-shirt for every staff member at our school. Each Friday EVERY adult at Dickinson Middle School wears a T-shirt with the logo "Reading + Writing = Success." This was our gift to the staff as we began our first leisure reading activity for students.

Our first reading activity was a Reading Footprint program. We gave each teacher a packet of materials that would be everything needed to explain the program to homeroom students. Each student received a reading log divided into ten-minute time increments represented on a chart by blocks. If a student read for enjoyment in any part of the building, he or she would have an adult verify the reading by initialing the block. Any adult in the building could initial, including secretaries, aides, principals, cafeteria workers, and custodians.

For each accumulated hour of reading, students earned a "footprint" to be put up in the hallway. The prints began in the media center and wended their way through the halls to the main office. Students, of course, improved on our idea by designing a hopscotch game and a basketball court on which footprints were placed.

A weekly drawing from names of students earning footprints was held. The winning student could choose any book from The Den, our students' own bookshop. In the four weeks, our students read IN SCHOOL a total of 21,540 minutes. The seventh grade winner read 1080 minutes, and the eighth grade winner read 560 minutes. Area bookstore gift certificates were the grand prizes. The students were not ready for the program to end; thus it was an excellent time to close the program for this year and move on to our next activity.

Our Indiana, Alive With Stories program began with a team of seventh grade students reading books by Indiana authors. Students read books by as many different authors as possible during this four-week period. A mural now hangs in the library media center shaped like the state of Indiana. The students drew pictures on the mural which were representative of their favorite Indiana author's book.

The culminating activity was done in cooperation with the St. Joseph County Public Library, Francis Branch. A "Breakfast With the Author" was held on April 22 at the branch library for the fifty students who had read the most books. A sit-down breakfast was provided, followed by a presentation by Indiana author Elaine Marie Alphin. The students were enthralled and pleased with a gift of a personally autographed copy of Alphin's book **Ghost Cadet**.

At the end of May, we completed our Home Reading/Sharing program and decorated our hallways with 8 1/2- by 11-inch pictures which students drew as they completed each book. A parent or guardian signature was required for verification. Our top winner read ninety-three books at home during the four-week program. Each student who participated received a "sipping cup" complete with our Dickinson logo. The grand prize winner received a special shirt designed especially for him.

As our seventh grade students leave for the summer, we will begin our Summer Home Reading/Sharing program, with gifts for participating students given in the fall as they return to school.

Circulation statistics have indicated that during these programs students checked out one-third more books than previously. A student attitude survey indicated that students were willing to read when given a wide choice of books and a program goal.

> . . . it was evident that we needed a shared vision between the constituencies on the importance of reading across the curriculum, throughout the school, and into the homes.

We are proud of the strides made by our school in reading for personal enjoyment. It has taken a bag of book tricks, the cooperation of the staff, the support of the principal, and the dedication of the Literacy Team. We will continue to make a difference.

Mary Lue Binning

has served as the library media specialist at Dickinson Middle School for the past two years. She is a former English teacher who has been a media specialist for fourteen years. She holds a master's degree in secondary education and is certified as a K-12 media specialist. In the fall of 1992 she was a presenter on literacy at the National Middle School Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

Dickinson Middle School has a population of 693 students in grades 7-8 in South Bend, Indiana. It serves an integrated urban population. Dickinson's greatest strength is also its greatest challenge: a highly diverse population which enables students to interact daily with those of differing cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Literacy has become a main focus at Dickinson Middle School with many enjoyable reading activities throughout the year designed to help students become lifelong readers.

Cynthia Whitmore, a first grader at Williams Elementary School, is being read to by Deshawn Williams, an eighth grader at Dunbar-Pulaski. Jarrod Weaver, a seventh grader, looks on.

Read-Ins: Colts in Action

Eugenia Sacopulos, Principal

A little out of breath with excitement, but not out of energy and commitment, Dunbar-Pulaski Middle School is collaborating with the Gary community to improve reading habits of our students to empower them.

Will our children be able to join in the struggle to make their lives better if they won't read? That question weighed heavily on our minds. Each day children read only what is assigned as homework and often do not do that. We want them to become thinkers who will reach for fact and fiction and read to learn and understand more about life. We know our children "in the middle" can and must read much better.

Together, the planning committee of five teachers, school and public librarians, our PTA president, and community volunteers brainstormed ways to reach our goals. We want to hook adolescents on reading through a social process, to improve the images of school and public libraries as places for lifelong learning, and to increase the number of books children read as a way to improve their reading abilities.

There is a sense of pride in our neighborhood. Lawns are manicured and homes are in good repair. There is no graffiti Sixty-nine percent of our 639 seventh and eighth grade students are considered indigent. We want all of our children to have as much pride in their school accomplishments as they have in their neighborhood.

This year, two-thirds of the children and one-fourth of the teachers are new to our school as we added sixth grade to our configuration. We have an enormous challenge ahead to make a positive impact on reading development and to inspire a love of reading.

Our minigrant supports a four-tier model. First, we are implementing a sustained silent reading program called Books in a Basket. How wonderful to get peaceful at least once a week with a good "read" for staff and students. Everyone will be reading thirty minutes each week. We want to build support for reading. To facilitate this project, we'll gather books in baskets each month for each teacher. We want to remove the isolation of reading alone by blending the use of high-interest paperbacks through in-school and out-of-school activities. We were fortunate to also receive a REAP (Reading Excitement and Paperbacks) grant to sustain and expand our efforts in improving reading performance. A large share of this grant will provide us with varied, high-interest Perma-Bound books that the children and staff select.

A wide selection of books and plenty of them will allow us to get the Books in a Basket in place for every teacher.

Exposing our middle schoolers to lively community readers has become a reality as another effort to motivate teens to read. High-profile readers and interesting personalities from priests to peddlers are invited to come to our library twice a month to read from favorite childhood books. We're videotaping them for future use in classrooms. Weaned on rock star videos and television, our teens are easily distracted from time on task when involved in quiet activities such as reading. They often do not see adults reading in their homes or in school.

Our third tier of the minigrant model engaged the members of a school club interested in a teaching career. With armfuls of read-aloud books, eleven Exploratory Teaching Club members and their sponsor board a school van twice a week to an Indiana University-sponsored child-care center to read to the preschoolers. Club members are learning how to select books to read to the children who are two to six years old. Their sponsor is a member of our planning team.

Joining in the read-aloud activities at a different site, the Dubois Branch of the Gary Public Library, are a group of poor readers whose reading and language arts teachers have tapped them to be storytellers to young children. Our hunch is that they'll build self-esteem as they read books at levels consistent with their abilities and which delight their young listeners.

Sitting on top of multilevel stools with scripts in hand, students have begun learning about readers' theater, another aspect of our reading-aloud projects. We've turned the video camera on students to "catch them in action" and to give the feeling of being in a TV studio. The teens love this activity, and they're reading without being nudged.

"You Don't Live on My Street" poetry workshops are to be jointly sponsored by the public library and Dunbar-Pulaski Middle School. Dr. Rebera Foston, a physician in Gary who has published poetry reflecting the fears and joys students feel during the turbulent adolescent years, will be our resource person and serve as a catalyst to help children enrich their vocabulary, increase their reading comprehension, and express their feelings and ideas through poetry.

Our commitment is real. Dunbar-Pulaski has been an active participant in the Middle Grades Reading Program. We have participated in the Parents Sharing Books program for the last three years. Our meetings are usually "over lunch" every two months. This program gave us an interest in the Electronic Bookshelf computer program which we purchased to help staff and students get a quick "read" on whether children were comprehending the high-interest books they were reading. Also, the reading motivation program encouraged parents to get involved. During the summer of 1992, our school media specialist invited the children's librarian at the Dubois Branch (located five blocks from Dunbar-Pulaski) to join her at the SOAR workshop in Indianapolis. As a result of the workshop, they implemented a Community Reader program and invited children's authors to hook children's interest in books. Our middle grades grant piggybacked this program.

We want to continue our momentum and are not leaving evaluation and planning to chance. What gets measured gets done is a principle we believe in, so we've engaged the entire staff to survey children's interest in books. We are employing both pre-grant and post-grant activities to measure improvement in reading and homework completion. Also, we expect our library circulation to escalate. As ownership of our reading model improves, so does the shape of our activities.

Staff is becoming more involved in reading activities and workshops. This spring four staff members attended the State Reading Association meetings, and as part of our grant, we've purchased books for our professional library. Staff is turned on!

Together--not nags but Colts in Action, as our project title states--students and staff are engaged in exciting activities for reading improvement. We are replacing our dim light on reading with a new "halogen" focus.

Eugenia Sacopulos

graduated from Indiana University and is the principal at Dunbar-Pulaski Middle School in Gary, Indiana. Her professional career began as a high school English teacher, and later she served as a guidance counselor. She has coauthored the book ***Turning On Turned Off Students*** *and has written articles focusing on reading as a way of understanding self. Presently she is chairperson of the Middle School Improvement Committee in Gary and serves as president of the Gary School Administrators' Association.*

Dunbar-Pulaski Middle School has a population of 639 students in grades 7-8. Ninety-eight percent are black Americans. An additional 300 sixth graders entered this year. The community is made up of many proud homeowners, and a sizable percentage of the students live in a housing project. Many of the children's parents have attended Dunbar-Pulaski, and there is an active alumni group. Involvement with parents and community agencies--including the Pulaski Alumni Association, Indiana University Northwest, the Bank of Indiana, the Smith-Bizzell Warner Funeral Home, the Newman Catholic Center, and First A.M.E. Methodist Church--exists to provide personal and monetary support for student activities, tutoring, and recognition.

Collaborative planning for decision making between staff and administrators is the norm, and many exploratory courses enhance the curriculum. The staff supports a varied extracurricular program. A collegial drive to improve literacy undergirds the school's improvement efforts.

Visits to the library were class events as the students challenged each other for the checkered flag.

The East Side 500: Race to Read--Read to Win!

Kathryn Carmody, Media Specialist

As another week ended with a thousand overdue library books, I reminded myself, "They are reading, they **are** reading--this is what we want." For one month our students read; parents and family members read; and teachers, neighbors, and community business people read. In four weeks we recorded 600,000 minutes of reading! Library circulation and bookshop sales soared. The East Side 500: Race to Read--Read to Win! was an overwhelming success.

We accomplished this success by establishing and working toward specific goals, supported by an influx of Lilly minigrant money targeted to instill lifelong reading habits. Earlier Lilly funding had been instrumental in the development of two other reading programs we still are vigorously pursuing. Both endowed programs--Teachers Under Cover and our Student-Operated Paperback Bookshop--have had an extraordinary impact on our faculty and student body. Like fueling Indy cars on the big day, these programs had fueled a genuine eagerness in our staff and students to read.

To keep from losing the momentum created by these earlier programs, we began to envision a new program (The East Side 500: Race to Read--Read to Win!) which would not only strengthen what we had already accomplished but which would also unite our school and community into a cooperative reading team. As we worked on the grant proposal, we realized that the depth of our needs was greater than we anticipated. We recognized our need to address cooperative planning with community groups and the public library, school-sponsored summer reading materials, and most of all, in-school emphasis on reading for all students, regardless of their reading ability.

Keeping in mind our deficiencies, English teacher Nancy Chamberlain, reading specialist LaDonna Moulder, and I worked together to develop "The Race" into a comprehensive program of activities which would involve as many diverse levels of reading as possible. (Here, a word of caution--we quickly learned too much too soon leads to chaos and frustration; more than once we backed up and rethought our activities.) The final components included class reading (silent and aloud), home reading, Electronic Bookshelf test results, Read 'N' Feeds at both school and the public library, and community and family reading verified by response cards. Points, which were converted into miles, were earned by participating in the various activities. One of our mathematics

teachers, Steve Harless, worked countless hours developing a computer program to convert the minutes read to miles as it weighed each activity according to its value.

Prior to "The Race," huge posters were hung in the library windows announcing the program. A giant racetrack was constructed of paper, and movable race cars were placed on the track representing our five school teams. By using the student teams already in place, every child was automatically entered in the race. We had two seventh grade teams, two eighth grade teams, and one mixed team composed of both grades of gifted, special, and regular students. Nancy and I did five-minute publicity presentations to all English classes and, passed out the home reading verification cards for parents, friends, and neighbors to use to keep track of the reading they did. These cards were also sent to many community businesses with a letter explaining our program and asking them to sponsor a team. Further publicity was generated through newsletters and meetings with public librarian Kathryn Closter and members of the business community.

The public library was a great partner. Kathryn organized a shared Read 'N' Feed, and thirty of our students attended for **The Trouble With Lemons**. At school we lunched and discussed **The View From the Cherry Tree**, and eighty students participated. Rally's hamburgers provided one meal and the Submarine Shop donated the second. Both times the kids asked, "When's the next one?"

Our community businesses provided strong support. Response cards from them poured in. Electronic Data Systems responded first and was followed by over two hundred other companies. In addition, literally thousands of cards came in from our students' families and neighbors. The parent volunteer group from East Side Middle School spent every Monday buried under mounds of colored response cards. We assigned each team a library window to display the cards sponsoring their team; they soon were completely covered.

Tallying points and comparing the team positions each week were exciting. The entire school population eagerly awaited assistant principal Bob Conner's report (he sounded like an official 500 race announcer, comically punctuating pauses with track sounds). The prizes were candy and soda for winning team students, and each team that crossed the finish line (all five did) was able to attend a video dance. During the celebration we also held drawings and awarded certificates for miniature golf, skating, swimming, movies, food, cassettes, and CDs.

Did we reach our goal? Did we excite the kids to read--kids of all abilities? Are we a reading community?

One noon I got a phone call--I thought it was someone being funny. Would I help her, the caller slowly mumbled. How did she fill out the card so her boy could give credit to his team for reading **The Three Little Pigs**. Suddenly I realized that her boy was one of our mentally handicapped children. This mother was equally handicapped and struggling to assist her child to participate in our reading race. I was profoundly moved as I realized the impact we'd had. **All** the students along with parents, teachers, friends, neighbors, public librarians, and businesses had done it. We were a reading community!

By the way, the mixed team won: the special child's team. They got first choice in selecting books purchased by Lilly funds for our first summer reading program, which I'll tell you about next time.

East Side students used every opportunity to read and discuss books during the month-long program.

Kathryn Carmody

has served as a media specialist for Anderson, Indiana, schools for twenty years—the past fifteen have been at East Side. She holds a master's degree in library science and is certified as a media specialist, K-12. Her enthusiasm for reading and involvement in educational programs which stimulate library usage have created an extremely busy middle school library; it is rare to find a quiet day at East Side's media center!

Seventh and eighth graders, 670 strong, attend East Side Middle School in Anderson, Indiana. Located forty miles north of Indianapolis, our program title reflects our proximity to the Indy 500 race. Our children, mainly from "General Motors homes" in the past, now reflect our city's changing economy and represent a diverse socioeconomic background. Recently we've tackled cooperative learning and teaming and a variety of smaller changes, and through it all, reading has been a priority and continually emphasized by our energetic faculty.

Pictured in our bookshop reading are our Literacy Club student members practicing being role models for their fellow students: (left to right, back row) Steve Lyday, Anthony Airman, Trevor Golish, Kelly Ridge, (front row) Shana Duguay, Christina Swalls, Mark Hauser, Jinny Myers, Rustin Rehmel, and Heather Ziekman.

Students Promote Their Own Literacy

Ronald Bush, Principal

What do you do when you run out of books for your students to read? That's what happened two years ago when the Hymera teachers wanted to allow the students time to read for pleasure on a daily basis. We began a daily sustained silent reading (S.S.R.) program throughout our school at that time. Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders soon were telling our teachers there was nothing left in our building for them to read. This was a pleasant "crisis situation" for us to solve. Things began to fall into place when we received a grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. to start a Student-Operated Bookshop in our school. We were given $5,000 to purchase books to sell to our students at reduced rates. This immediately brought books into our building.

Next our junior high participated in the **Literacy Assessment for the Middle Grades** from the Center for Early Adolescence out of the University of North Carolina. This self-assessment proved to us what we already knew: our students needed access to more reading materials, and they needed to do more writing.

As the result of the literacy assessment, our staff began to look for ways to meet our students' needs. We already had a successful Student-Operated Bookshop. The student officers of the bookshop decided upon promotions, set work schedules, and ordered and priced books. Our students had proved to us that they could operate the bookshop with very little help. Our S.S.R. times had now become an integral part of our school day. In fact, Mr. Pearman, our language arts teacher, says "...woe be the teacher who forgets S.S.R."

We wanted to build upon our successful activities and continue searching for ways to improve our students' reading and writing habits. Our teachers decided to start a Student-Operated Literacy Club (S.O.L.C.). We received a $5,000 grant through the Middle Grades Reading Network and the Lilly Endowment Inc. The purpose of the club is to allow the students to take "ownership" in the process of inspiring students to read and write about books. The S.O.L.C. board of directors is made up of three students from each of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, the librarian, a parent, and two teachers. The board meets weekly to discuss ways to promote reading in our school. There is particular emphasis on the reluctant readers and writers. The Literacy Club activities include sustained silent writing (S.S.W.) time each day for the students to write about books they are reading or any other thoughts they might want to record in their journals. Each week the student board members conduct a class meeting during S.S.R.

and S.S.W. times. During these meetings the student leaders provide special activities to inspire the reluctant reader, conduct contests to promote reading, and encourage students to share their thoughts about the books they have been reading. One of our student board members, Shana Duguay, says about her involvement with the Literacy Club, "I like the Literacy Club because it's fun. We try to find new and interesting ways to encourage people to read."

We began our club this year by having all of the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders pledge to read books during a four-week time period. At the weekly meetings students were asked how they were doing with their books. Those students who were having difficulty in finding a book or who could not get started were helped by their classmates to find one that was interesting to them. As the result of this encouragement, only four students did not meet their pledge. The student board members were asked not to demean students for not reading but to find ways to bring them into the process. We even have reluctant readers on our student board of directors. The Literacy Club directors believe that all students will read if we can connect them to interesting books.

The club's weekly planning meetings are concerned about making plans for promotions to encourage reading. Not all promotions are successful, but we always discuss what we could have done differently to have made it a success. A student dress-up day to promote reading flopped. It was decided that we didn't promote the activity enough, and a lot of the students did not know about what we were doing. Plans were made to try it again--but to do a better job next time. A very successful promotion was a student lottery. Students were given a lottery ticket for every ten pages they had read for enjoyment the past week. The reading did not have to be from a book. Students could read newspapers, magazines, informational flyers, etc. Over five hundred lottery tickets were given, and EVERY student received a ticket. Winners in each class were given two-dollar gift certificates to purchase books in our Student-Operated Bookshop.

Our Student-Operated Bookshop works closely with the Literacy Club. Our bookshop will special order any books that kids want to purchase. Much of the money received from the Middle Grades Reading Network grant is being spent to purchase books for the students. This year we participated in the Young Hoosiers Book Award (YHBA) program. The bookshop ordered copies of all the nominated books, and the Literacy Club promoted the reading and voting of "your favorite book" from the list. One of our reluctant reader student board members stated the reason he enjoyed being a part of the Literacy Club when he said, "We get to help people get books that they want to read."

Literacy Club activities do not end over the summer A "Book Chain" was organized to encourage summer reading. Groups of five or less students promised to read a book every two weeks and pass the book to the next "link" in their chain. They pledged not to break the chain, and for their pledge everyone in the group was given a book to start the summer.

Mrs. Bledsoe, home economics teacher at Hymera, summed up the program the best when she said, "I feel our school has been very fortunate to have a Student-Operated Literacy Club this year. The club has helped develop more interest in reading by having several activities to promote reading and writing. It gives the students a chance to be involved in the planning of activities and to purchase books the students are interested in reading."

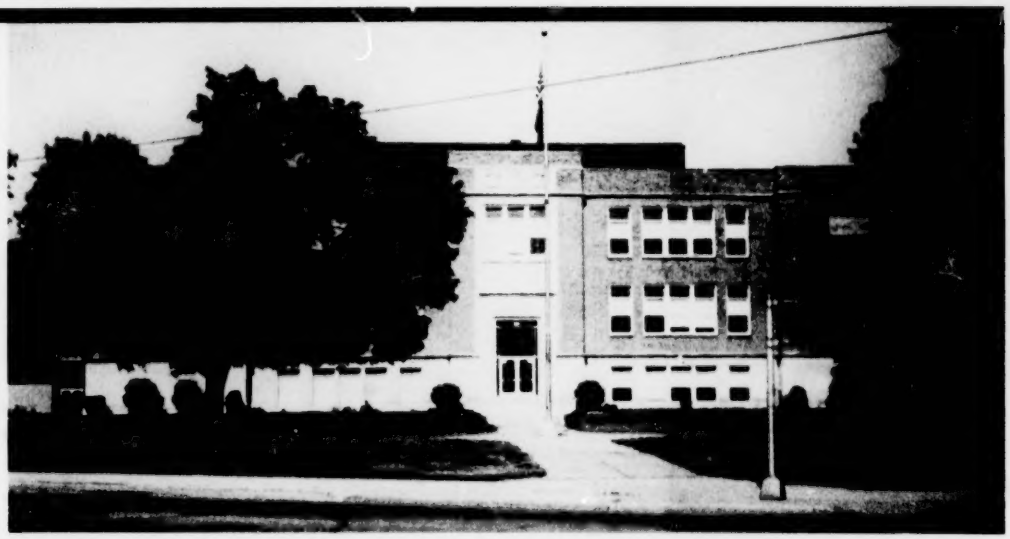
> "I like the Literacy Club because it's fun. We try to find new and interesting ways to encourage people to read."
>
> Shana Duguay
> Student Board Member

Ronald Bush

has been principal at Hymera School for the past three years and was principal at Shelburn School for five years. Prior to becoming a principal, he worked in industry after teaching industrial arts and physical education for nine years. He holds an educational specialist degree in school administration. He "sat on the roof" and "read from a pigpen" to promote reading at his school.

Hymera School is a small rural school with 240 kindergarten through eighth grade students, including a sixth to eighth grade enrollment of 80 students. The school is located in the northeastern section of Sullivan County in Hymera, Indiana, a small community once known for its many coal mines. Hymera School houses the corporation's gifted/talented program, special education classes, and several special middle school reading programs. Reading is FUN-damental at Hymera School.

John L. McCulloch Middle School



J.L. McCulloch Middle School, Marion, Indiana.

Multicultural Awareness Through Reading

Artis Hoffmann, Media Specialist
Virginia Mankin Lake, Gifted/Talented Teacher

Artis Hoffmann

has served as a media specialist at McCulloch Middle School in Marion, Indiana, for three years. Prior to that she was a librarian at Taylor University where she also taught a course in children's literature. She holds a B.S. in elementary education and is certified as a K-12 media specialist. She is very interested in reading and activities that promote use of the school and public libraries.

As many of the staff of John L. McCulloch Middle School began to read the Performance-Based Assessment report during the spring of 1992, a statistic was noticed which was evident during all classes--known but unnoticed until read in print. The McCulloch community is a miniature United Nations. Students and staff represent such cultural groups as Iraqi, Hispanic, Nigerian, Samoan, Ukrainian, East Indian, Native American, African-American, European, and Appalachian.

With such a rich and diverse community, the Reading Network Grant Committee had no problem in selecting a focus for the grant program. McCulloch needs to utilize the wealth of its cultural diversity to help students become more aware of their heritage and the heritage of others. Our goals are to help students become more tolerant of others and be effective global citizens.

Five ethnic groups were selected to represent our community: African-American, Native American, Asian, Hispanic, and Russian. The grant has provided the resources to purchase a variety of print and nonprint materials representing the culture of each ethnic group. Folklore, poetry, biographies, nonfiction, and modern fiction representing life in each culture have been purchased. The music department has selected books and music to correspond with the print selections. An atlas and foreign language CD-ROM programs were also purchased.

One objective of the program is to involve parents and the community with students and reading. Parents and community members have been invited into classes to read about and share their heritage with students. Our committee has planned the following activities in order to focus on parents and students sharing their culture and reading together.

Activities:

1. Literary lunches will be held once a month for each grade level to discuss books with multicultural themes. Books read will come from a preassigned list. Parents who have read the books will also be invited to lunch. The lunches will be in the library. The table will be set with tablecloth, napkins, and flowers. Dessert will be served. Multiple copies of the books to be discussed will be in both the school and public libraries. Book lists will also be available in the school and public libraries.

2. Parents and students from Indiana Wesleyan University and Taylor University will be invited to read aloud or book talk on works with multicultural

themes. They will address all language arts classes the last Friday of each grading period. Following the title "STOP! POP! AND READ!" teachers will present students with Tootsie Roll Pops as they are being read to.

3. Reading materials including books on tape will be made available to all students. Supplementing books with tapes is especially helpful for at-risk students. The students will be able to check out the materials for use at home. This is another activity for students and parents to do together. Hopefully, through this activity parents who are illiterate will become motivated to seek reading help.

4. The seventh grade language arts classes are developing scripts from books on the multicultural list. The scripts are then performed by the students in book talks. The book talks are presented to other classes and are videotaped for later presentation on our local cable television channel.

5. During the summer of 1993, the McCulloch librarian, Artis Hoffmann, will do volunteer work at the public library. This will enable her to become better acquainted with the children's and young adult collections and to establish a more personal relationship with the public library staff.

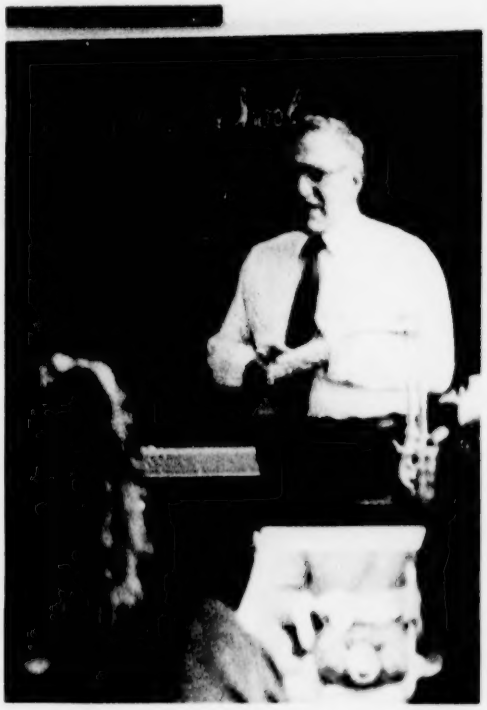
6. In the fall during National Book Week, fifth grade classes will visit the public library to familiarize students with the facility and the collections. Eighth grade students will also visit the public library to become acquainted with the reference department and staff.

7. The committee is trying to arrange visits to McCulloch by two authors during the 1993-1994 school year. One author, who grew up in Marion, writes and illustrates her books, which have multicultural themes. She also illustrates for other authors. Not only will she talk to language arts classes about her writing, but she will also visit art classes to discuss her training and work with graphic arts.

The second author is well known for her multicultural writings. McCulloch is joining with the local chapter of the Indiana Reading Association in trying to bring this author to Marion for two days. On the first day she will address our students. She will participate in an activity with the IRA on the following day.

8. The program finale will be celebrated with "Pride Night." Students will display research and projects with a multicultural theme. Parents, staff, and community members will help with student performances and presentations.

Books and materials acquired through the Reading Network grant will be on display. To reinforce recreational reading, the Parent Advisory Committee will sponsor a Book Fair (many titles are on the multicultural book list) during the evening.



Virginia Mankin Lake

has served as a teacher in the gifted/talented program at McCulloch Middle School for six years. She holds a master's degree in elementary education and a specialist of education degree in special education and is certified in gifted/talented and middle school. She has developed and written curriculum for Marion Community Schools for eight years and has been a contributing author for an Indiana history textbook.

Maurice Andrea, counselor, describes growing up in Iraq to students.

McCulloch Middle School has a population of 646 students in grades 5-8. McCulloch is situated in a diverse socioeconomic area of Marion, Indiana. Over 55 percent of the students' parents receive some form of government assistance. McCulloch offers special education classes, an at-risk program, and classes for the gifted and talented. In addition to the teaching faculty, the McCulloch staff includes counselors, social workers, migrant coordinator, and nurse.

McGary Middle School

Just part of the cast and crew of ***Hooked on Reading****.*

(Left to right) John Luttrull, Charles Hall, Aric Weiss, Scott Foster, Robbie Gregory, Monique Brown, and Mindi Swallow are all sixth and seventh grade students at McGary Middle School in Evansville, Indiana.

Hooked on Reading

Sue Layman, Reading Teacher
Steve Spradley, Reading Teacher

Making reading useful, meaningful, and at the same time pleasurable for middle school students is certainly a tough assignment for teachers of reading. But a project such as Reading, Writing, and VCRs might accomplish such a goal in your school. This project combines the challenges of television production with the reading of quality literature and with writing in response to activities involving them.

The concept involves producing a television video that promotes reading. It is loosely patterned after the Public Broadcasting System's **Reading Rainbow**. At the conclusion of the project, the videos produced will be shared with other area middle schools, our school's feeder schools, and the community. More than forty sixth and seventh grade students have been involved in the production of the videos. They have written scripts, auditioned talent, directed, and produced. In addition, they have worked on site selection for filming and development of wardrobe. They have also made critical decisions on what scenes from the books would give viewers an idea of what the books are about and a desire to read them. Students then acted with enthusiasm to produce the program.

Most important is the fact that each of these students read two complete novels in a very short period of time. The project began by dividing each class in half and assigning a different novel to each group. Both teachers involved in the project were amazed at the enthusiasm the students had for reading these books. As soon as they had finished one of the books, they became excited about the prospect of reading the other.

The novels used were **Monkey Island** by Paula Fox and **Night of the Twisters** by Ivy Ruckman. Both books fit the "challenges" theme of the pilot video. In **Monkey Island** an eleven-year-old boy suddenly finds himself homeless in the streets of New York City after his mother abandons him in their apartment. He meets two homeless men who take care of him and teach him the ways of the streets. **Night of the Twisters** presents another challenge in that the main character, Dan, is swept into a chain of events that would test the mettle of anyone. The small Nebraska town he lives in is virtually destroyed by a series of tornados. He and two friends are left in charge of his infant brother and go in search of his mother who was separated from him during the storms.

The video includes an interview with a local meteorologist who talks about predicting severe storms. There are also several book reviews and a reading of a special picture book on homelessness. The videotaping was done in sections and will be edited for the final product. We were fortunate to have an in-house cable television system including a studio to use for some of the taping.

During planning for the project, the teachers involved concentrated on developing activities for two groups of students: a sixth grade regular reading class and a seventh grade regular reading class. Always mindful of how to involve the groups, it was easy to overlook individuals. However, when comparing notes on our progress, we discussed several incidents of individual achievement that made the project worthwhile. While we are still waiting to judge whether the group effort is a success (editing will not be completed until school resumes in August), we are now confident that some individual progress has been made, supporting the principle that we don't teach groups, only individuals.

This became very clear with one boy, "Tom," who has not been previously known for his reading ability. He volunteered for one of the major on-camera roles. The role required a great deal of reading and memorization. In fact, this previously unmotivated student even gave up several lunch hours to practice his lines. Even so, he never quite memorized all his lines and was script-dependent during the taping. We had to retake one scene several times, but he did not become discouraged. His self-esteem seemed to grow instead of sputter. This is remarkable given the fact that about two months before the beginning of this project, Tom had an emotionally upsetting encounter with reading in the classroom. Tom had volunteered to read a passage from a book and, from the start, was very unsure of himself. He read haltingly with several miscues. While Tom read the passage, another student snickered at his performance. Tom burst into tears and put his head down in humiliation and frustration. In a conference after class, it appeared that Tom's self-esteem had been shattered and that he would never volunteer to read again. Thanks to this project, Tom has regained his self-respect and has regained confidence in his reading ability, which in turn may help him to improve.

Our students have displayed enthusiasm for reading and writing that we have not previously seen.

Another somewhat reluctant reader learned a great deal about himself. "Shawn" was a major actor in the **Monkey Island** scene and became extremely frustrated when one scene had to be retaped several times. Shawn became confused and frustrated because people kept giving him conflicting orders. Almost in tears, he began telling us of his feelings. One of the teachers took him aside to calm him down and soothe his nerves and said, "Tell me the truth. When you grow up, do you want to be an actor or have a job that involves reading?" Shawn answered, "Oh, I'd rather be reading any day!"

As this article is written, we are in the middle of our project. At this point, we (the teachers who are working together) feel that it is a worthwhile, motivating activity. Our students have displayed enthusiasm for reading and writing that we have not previously seen. We encourage anyone with energy to give it a try--especially at the beginning of the year. You will find your students truly "Hooked on Reading"!

Sue Layman

has taught reading at McGary Middle School in Evansville, Indiana, for six years. She is president of the Evansville Area Reading Council. She recently earned a master's degree in elementary education and is certified to teach reading at the middle school level.

Steve Spradley

also teaches reading at McGary. He holds a master's degree in elementary education and is certified to teach middle school reading. He is secretary for the Evansville Area Reading Council.

McGary Middle School is located in Evansville, Indiana, and serves a diverse population of approximately 600 students in grades 6-8. Students mainly come from low to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. Reading is taught as a separate subject at all grade levels. The school has classes ranging from advanced reading to those that provide remedial help, including Chapter I reading instruction which is an integral part of McGary's reading program. McGary also has a flourishing paperback bookstore.

North Side Middle School, Anderson, Indiana.

S.T.A.R.S.–Students Treasure All Reading Success

Mary Ann Wildman, Reading Teacher

Through a study of the needs of our students, we have concluded that in order for them to survive on both a professional and personal level, they must become lifelong readers. North Side Middle School's S.T.A.R.S. program (Students Treasure All Reading Success) addresses this concern.

Anderson, Indiana, has long been considered a "factory town." The economy has been based on the employment levels of both Delco Remy and Fisher Guide Divisions of General Motors. In light of the current restructuring of this automaker, the handwriting is clearly on the wall. Future jobs will be in the areas of service and information, not in manufacturing. The continuing growth of this community will depend upon the skills and education of its citizens. The bottom line is, to succeed you must read.

Based on our needs assessment, we have decided to involve our students in a program which emphasizes their choices in developing lifelong reading habits. Exciting activities should motivate students to **choose** to read. We hope to see a significant impact on student reading by focusing on three main areas: independent reading, evaluation/selection of reading materials, and community sharing.

Through development of independent reading, students will enjoy what they have chosen to read. Toward this end, we currently have a sustained silent reading program and a Student-Operated Paperback Bookshop in place, and we plan on implementing a summer reading program. Sustained silent reading takes place twice each six weeks for a twenty-five-minute period. This time rotates through the class periods so that no one class has lost instructional time. Cartons of books have been provided to those classrooms that might not have an abundance of reading materials. Most students and faculty look forward to a relaxed time when they do nothing but read. Our goal is to expand this program to a weekly or even daily activity through an advisor-advisee component.

Our Student-Operated Paperback Bookshop (Books 'A Bundle) has been open since mid-October. Response thus far has been extremely positive. Students take pride in working at their business where they can purchase the latest young adult novels at a reduced price. The bookshop staff and faculty advisor are working to involve the bookshop with other reading activities in our school.

A summer reading program will be implemented with the support and cooperation of the Anderson Public Library. Students will receive information about the program during the month before the end of school. They will sign up to participate in the program and will report their progress directly to the young adult librarian. Prizes will be awarded to students who reach their summer reading goal, and we will celebrate these achievements in the fall.

Making good choices and selecting appropriate reading materials are also important in building a community of readers. In order to guide students in the selection process, the young adult librarian at the Anderson Public Library comes to the English classes to present book talks on literature. Through closed-circuit TV, students discuss books and present book commercials. Faculty and staff also act in melodramas to promote current literature and literacy. The **Book Review Newsletter** will be a part of our **North Side Parent Newsletter** which is published four times a year. This new newsletter will include book reviews by students, teachers, and parents as well as book recommendations and profiles of young adult authors. Patterned after Oscar ceremonies, our best-book awards will be determined by students and featured in our reading activities. These programs will emphasize the choices students make and will help them develop evaluative skills.

Community sharing is a vital component in building a community of readers. Through utilizing community leaders and parents as reading role models, students can see the importance of being a lifelong reader.

The Read 'N' Feeds have taken place monthly. This activity is held in the media center during both the seventh and eighth grade lunch hours. Discussion leaders are teachers from various disciplines as well as prominent citizens, celebrities, and parents. We have had two Read 'N' Feeds this semester. The novels **The View From the Cherry Tree** and **Wolf Rider** were featured. The response from students, faculty discussion leaders, and community food donors was extremely positive and enthusiastic. Students are already asking which books will be featured for the fall semester.

Because it is essential to reach and involve at-risk students for this program to be successful, several strategies have been used in planning. Themes and reading level of material have been carefully chosen so as to appeal to a broad base of students. Several genres will be chosen with the menu and activities tailor-made to complement theme and subject.

Through utilizing community leaders and parents as reading role models, students can see the importance of being a lifelong reader.

The most recent government studies point to the urgency of becoming a community of readers. We are modeling reading as a positive and desirable alternative to television, video games, etc. Because there is such an overwhelming need to read, community and business leaders are anxious to do what they can to help in any way. Nothing succeeds like success, and with a program in which reading is viewed as enjoyable and exciting, community and business leaders are willing to invest more time and money. We are also fortunate to have a commitment from the young adult librarian at our public library to provide resources, conduct book talks, and sponsor Read 'N' Feed sessions. We believe that our approach to building a community of readers will enable students to better reach their reading potential and become educated, contributing members of our community.

Mary Ann Wildman

has served as a reading teacher at North Side Middle School in Anderson, Indiana, for three years. Prior to becoming a reading teacher, she taught grades 5-8 for ten years. She holds a master's degree in elementary education and is certified as a K-12 reading specialist.

North Side Middle School has a population of 625 students in grades 7-8. North Side is located in a residential neighborhood in Anderson, Indiana, and serves students from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. North Side houses classes for several special education programs. The school also offers a gifted and talented program. Reading is a priority at North Side involving faculty, staff, students, and parents in a wide range of activities.

Page Turners Amanda Frazer, Tara Scott, Kristi Butler, Devon Crider, Margaret Brammer, David Zubowski, Jon Weidert, Josh Griffin, and Bobby Crossley welcome visitors to the Seventh Grade Building.

Reading for Fun

Beth Schulte, Media Specialist

Reading for Fun is an extracurricular program for seventh and eighth grade students in the New Castle schools. We had already incorporated sustained silent reading into our homerooms and the Accelerated Reader program and our SOAR Bucket of Books program into our English classes, but we wanted something more, something that would go beyond the curriculum, something that would encourage reading for fun and relaxation. We designed our program to go beyond the regular school day.

We began with a reading survey in the spring of 1992 among the seventh grade students, and one of the surprising results was that over 90 percent of the students said that they liked to read and that they considered themselves good readers. We were really surprised that the percentage was so high. Whether they were good readers or not, most students still had a positive attitude toward reading. It is this attitude that we wanted to capitalize on with our Reading for Fun program. We then planned a five-part program: an after-school reading club called the Page Turners; a field trip to the Indiana Repertory Theatre, a nationally recognized professional theater; a summer program at the public library; a video workshop conducted by a consultant from Indianapolis; and a visit with a nationally known children's author. We wanted to start a community of readers that would grow to include a wide variety of personalities and ages.

The first part of our program is our after-school book club called the Page Turners. At the beginning of the school year, an invitation was sent to all English classes inviting students to become members of the Page Turners. The club meets twice a month after school to discuss books that the students have read as a group or books that they have read individually. The students choose the books that they read. These paperbacks are then available at one dollar each. Not only does this give the students a sense of ownership but it also generates seed money for next year's club. At least once a year, there is a lunch meeting. The club will also meet during the summer at the public library. The Page Turners has been very successful due in part to the fact that middle school is the first opportunity for many students to be involved in extracurricular school activities, and they are eager. This is a wonderful opportunity to interest them in reading and discussing for fun. The Page Turners really enjoyed the activities. One member said that she liked being able to have her own books so that she could "read them over and over." Another member wrote that he appreciated the "cheep" books.

The second phase of our program was a field trip.

In May we attended the play **Hamlet** at the Indiana Repertory Theatre. The students read and studied the play beforehand. This was part of our plan to extend our reading to plays, poetry, and nonfiction. This provided an opportunity for the students to see literature come alive, produced by an excellent professional theater company. This was the first chance for most and the only chance for many of our students to see a live professional production. All loved the field trip and are ready for more plays.

The third component will be a summer program that will be held at the public library during June and July. At the end of the school year, we will have a pizza party to kick off our summer reading program. Members of the public library staff will join us to present some of their latest titles. Our public library staff is very interested in promoting recreational reading for middle school readers.

In the fall of 1993, we will learn to produce our own videos featuring club members presenting book reviews. This will be part four of Reading for Fun, and we hope to accomplish two things. First, we want to help the students visualize the literature, and second, we want to provide a way to reach students who are not directly involved in the program. Young people in our society are very visually oriented. Using this knowledge, we incorporated a video workshop into our program where students can learn to produce their own book, play, and poetry reviews. We have secured the services of Mr. Andrew Walcott, library media specialist at the Park Tudor School in Indianapolis. Mr. Walcott will conduct a two-part workshop for staff and students. The first will be introduction and planning; the second will be held after students have begun taping so that there can be an evaluation and review of the work as well as suggestions for completion. Producing these videos will give us an excellent outreach program. Having the videos available for classroom and library use will provide book reviews and suggestions for all students and staff. Multiple copies of all literature reviewed on video will be purchased for the library in anticipation of the additional requests.

Finally, during the fall semester of 1993 we will sponsor a visit by a nationally known author. We will include grades six through eight. The author will be with us for two days, speaking to the students and meeting with small groups to discuss his or her novels. Paperback copies of the author's books will be made available to the Page Turners; hardbacks, as well as additional paperbacks, will be available in the media center.

In conclusion, we feel that, although our grant year is half over, we have only just begun. Our future plans include adding a readers' theater, emphasizing nonfiction, and expanding the Page Turners to the ninth grade.

Parkview Junior High School has a population of 670 students in grades 8 and 9. The New Castle Seventh Grade Building has 330 seventh graders. Situated in a rural area fifty miles east of Indianapolis, the two schools serve students from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Teachers from both buildings have previously participated in Teachers Under Cover and Stimulating Opportunities for Adolescents to Read.

Beth Schulte

currently serves as the library media specialist for Parkview Junior High School and the New Castle Seventh Grade Building in New Castle. Ms. Schulte holds a B.S. degree in speech and English from Purdue University and an M.L.S. from California State Fullerton. She is active in the Association for Indiana Media Educators, serving as the District 6 representative to the state executive board.

Parkview eighth grade students enjoy selecting their paperbacks for the Page Turners.

Pierre Moran Middle School

Stasha Brown and Lykisha Sims prepare for their "Read" posters from the books they have completed.

Role Models Increase Student Reading

Beth Bedsworth, Language Arts Teacher

"I don't want anyone to know I read. Only nerds and dorks read. . ." This response, unfortunately, is a common attitude among middle school students. Peer pressure, especially in the middle school years, is often seen by teachers as a negative force to be counteracted. Peer pressure from positive role models, however, can also significantly affect reading achievement. How can interest in reading become contagious? Use of adult and teenage role models, posters and other media material, sustained silent reading, book festivals, and a Book Talk Troupe might begin the necessary reframing.

After reading "You Don't Live on My Street" by Dr. Rebera Elliott Foston, a black physician/poet from Gary, students were inspired. Her practice with adolescents dealt with much pain: abuse, homelessness, and addictions. These poems about real people communicated with students on a gut level. On their own initiative, they dramatized one of her poems on videotape and asked her to come to Pierre Moran Middle School. She accepted. During Dr. Foston's presentation, she explained the process of "birthing" various poems and then performed them. For the rest of the school year, the book was a favorite item, and poetry writing wasn't only for "sissies." With exposure to a respected role model, poetry reading and writing became acceptable for all.

Celebrities provided additional role models. In the American Library Association's "Read" posters, famous people are engaged in reading. Pierre Moran "celebrities" who read ten books had their pictures taken and enlarged into posters. These posters were displayed in the halls. Buttons about reading promoted reading interest as well.

Teachers also provided role models and opportunities to read. In order to increase students' reading time, two language arts teachers offered sustained silent reading in their classrooms. Current popular reading books arrived from the Lilly Reading Network grant and provided students easy accessibility. Students watched others absorbed in their reading, did buddy reading, and naturally shared what was "good." As one student concluded, "Reading is OK because everyone's involved in it. No one will look at just one person reading and say he's strange."

Frequent reading led easily into a Book Festival where students presented books. Five stations were created introducing such authors as Stine, Pike, and Schwartz in the scary stories section; Silverstein and Foston in poetry; Bo Jackson and Michael Jordan in sports; and various authors in the gameboard section. The gameboard station used popular game show formats to introduce books. Whether it was sitting in a tent and hearing about the dog that was really a rabid

sewer rat in scary stories, shooting baskets after a correct answer from a sports trivia book, or winning the final **Jeopardy** question, students from many language arts classes saw reading as an active event. Students became role models for one another as they introduced a total of twenty-five new books each hour. A second "new and improved" Book Festival finished out the school year with a similar format.

To continue this "gossip" about books, a Book Talk Troupe formed. After a day of training with a professional actor, students were ready to present short descriptions, "flashes," and first-person monologues. With a soft voice and Southern accent, a student became Cassie in **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry**. Another girl became the prim Charlotte Doyle who discovered, to her horror, that she was the only female on a ship bound for America. Teams of three or four students visited language arts classrooms for ten-minute periods. Surveys given immediately after the presentations showed the desired results. Yes, students were "hooked" and wanted to read the books that were introduced.

Along with follow-up surveys, a reading comprehension test was given in the fall of 1992 and spring of 1993. When results of the **Metropolitan Achievement Reading Test** are available, increased comprehension is expected. A final assessment will be given in the winter of 1993.

Starting new programs is a difficult task for teachers already overloaded. The added time for brainstorming and implementation is overwhelming. But once started, the various reading incentives could be fairly low maintenance. If the programs make reading a priority in students' lives, it is worth the effort.

Reading in Pierre Moran is beginning to lose its negative stereotypes. Adults--actual authors and teachers--and the students themselves are teaching that reading is important and fun. When students don't have to face the negative comments about reading and can experience reading improvement, the combination is powerful. One student mused, "I'm reading a lot more at home. I even take time out from listening to the radio to read. When I read more, I begin to read a little better." That is the goal.

The first step is for students to select and read books without fear of being teased. Author visits, posters, various types of media experiences, sustained silent reading, the Book Festival, and Book Talk Troupe have made the reading experience a positive one. They have taken that first step. At Pierre Moran Middle School, reading is becoming more "socially" acceptable and the pressure is on--to read.

Beth Bedsworth

has served as a language arts teacher at Pierre Moran Middle School for four years. Prior to language arts, she taught Chapter I reading for five years and high school English for six years. She holds a master's degree in secondary education and is certified in English 7-12 and reading K-12. As a Lilly Creativity Fellow, she has used drama to teach reading. She has led various workshops on successful reading techniques.

Members of the Book Talk Troupe gather with their props for the one-day training session on how to present books dramatically.

Pierre Moran Middle School in Elkhart, Indiana, has a student population of 540. It serves students from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Pierre Moran houses numerous special education programs including mildly mentally handicapped, emotionally handicapped, and learning disabilities as well as a gifted and talented program. In the 1986-1987 school year, Pierre Moran was one of fifteen Indiana middle schools to receive a recognition/improvement grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

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River Forest Junior High School

River Forest Junior High students order books for the Reading Lasts a Lifetime project. Staff member Ron Hughes and principal Robert Marszalek supervise.

Reading Lasts a Lifetime

J. Ronald Hughes, Social Studies/Language Arts Teacher

The majority of the students at River Forest Junior High School in Hobart, Indiana, considered reading unimportant and tiresome. They did not see any correlation between reading and success in the classroom and success in the world of work.

The building principal, Robert Marszalek, knew that reading was an anathema to the students. The librarian, Peg Hunt, and the library support staff were dismayed that the students avoided the media center. Instructors, of course, knew that reading was important, but creating reading opportunities and strategies were not really within their realm of responsibilities. After all, curricular content was the name of the game. As the staff reviewed the ISTEP and CTBS reading scores and the library circulation statistics, the frustration mounted. The solution to the reading dilemma came in the guise of a Books for Rural Youth Access project funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.

Eligibility for the Books for Rural Youth Access project was based on the number of free-lunch participants and an action plan for circulating the books obtained through the $10,000 grant. A committee composed of the media specialist, a social studies instructor, and a language arts instructor was appointed by the building principal to develop the action plan.

Before the action plan was designed, the committee assessed the roots of the problem of a nonreading student population. Five major factors were identified that discouraged student extracurricular reading. (1) Students were denied opportunities to browse the library bookshelves since instructors did not want to surrender valuable class time. (2) Many of the books on the shelves in the media center were outdated and had little appeal for a middle school student population. (3) Students did not see reading as a valuable recreational activity because they did not see reading modeled by family members or instructional staff. (4) To motivate the student population to "Read to Succeed," class time would have to be structured to provide opportunities for students to read during the school day. (5) A wide variety of graded reading materials was not accessible to the students.

During a staff in-service and awareness session, the action plan committee shared the major factors they had identified and asked for input on implementation of a reading program. The staff agreed to make book selections from the Perma-Bound catalog and to experiment with a read-aloud and sustained silent reading period that would become the keystone of the program.

The read-aloud and sustained silent reading

period was established on a weekly basis for a fifty-minute time slot. During the first twenty-five minutes, the classroom instructors would read aloud from any book, magazine, or article of their choice. For the remaining twenty-five minutes, the students would read books of their choice. To ensure that each student had a book available, the library staff delivered milk crates filled with a variety of books to each classroom prior to the reading period. The reading period was staggered each week so as not to deprive students and instructors of instructional time during the same period each week.

A schedule for the semester was distributed to each staff member, reading posters were plastered throughout the hallways and in the classrooms, and a book display emphasizing the wide variety of literary genres available in the media center was placed in the main lobby display case.

While implementing the read-aloud and sustained silent reading program, the junior high was invited by Jack Humphrey of the Middle Grades Reading Network to submit a proposal for another minigrant funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. The reading committee proposed Reading Lasts a Lifetime project, which was primarily based on the action plan for the Books for Rural Youth Access project.

Using read-aloud and sustained silent reading as the key component for Reading Lasts a Lifetime, the reading committee plotted other strategies for motivation and success. The proposal submitted to the Middle Grades Reading Network was approved, and the Parents Sharing Books committee, composed of three parents and five students, proceeded to choose books which they thought would interest middle school readers. Enthusiastically, the students and parents selected high-interest-content books that culminated in a $3,000 book order.

To maintain momentum for reading "mania," a reading assembly was scheduled with Dr. John Davis, a reading specialist from Purdue University, as the main presenter. Since students who excel in athletics are always honored at pep sessions and assemblies, the committee decided to honor selected students who had participated in the reading program. Classroom teachers nominated the students, and during the assembly the school band performed. Naturally, the awards presented were books.

To continue to reinforce that reading is important, the committee took the award winners on a field trip to the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago and to a showing of **The Fires of Kuwait** at the Omnimax Theater.

Athletes also have a sports banquet; therefore, not to be outdone, the committee and students dined at the Old Country Buffet Restaurant. During the dinner, each student was presented with a $10 gift certificate to be used at Book World, a bookstore two doors down from the restaurant. Shopping was intense as the students made their selections.

To summarize, through trial and error we discovered that students will read and become "hooked on reading" if a building principal will actively support a reading program. Administrative support is vital! Students will read--not all at the same level or voracity--if given time to read, and staff members will cooperate if properly in-serviced. But in order to really "hook" the reader, the library or media center must have up-to-date book selections. Whether fiction or nonfiction, as the students browsed the bookshelves, they automatically headed for the shelves housing the latest acquisitions.

The challenge for the future is great! As students leave the middle grades to enroll at the secondary level, reading must continue to be an integral facet of their high school years. To secure funds needed to stock the library with books that will be widely circulated, private and corporate grantors must be sought. Teachers must be encouraged to join the Indiana Reading Association and local reading councils. Continuation of the reading program at the high school level would be the greatest gift educators could give to students in an era of global economic competition.

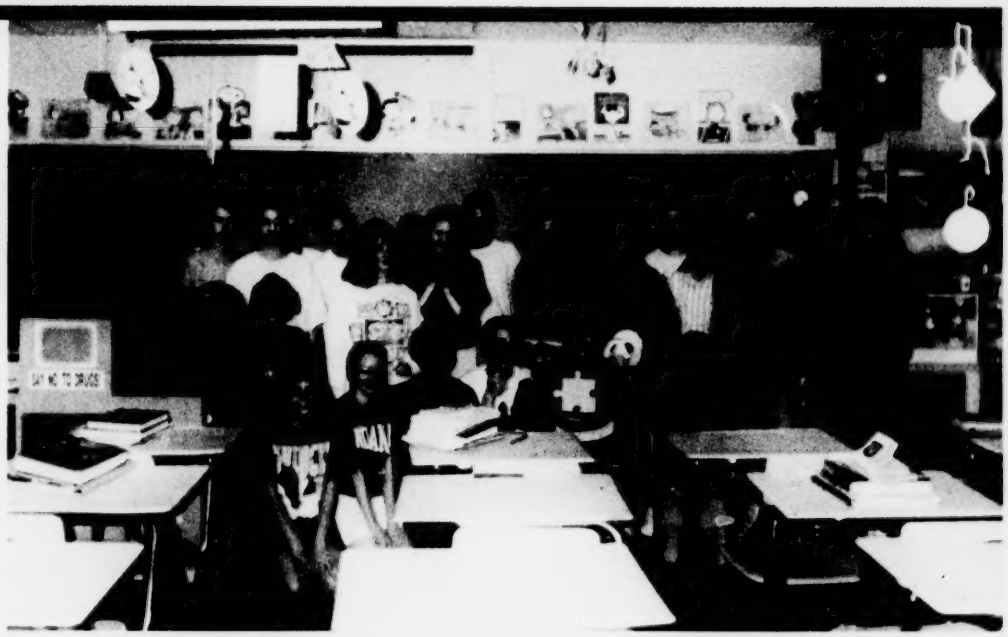
Purdue University reading specialist Dr. John Davis and River Forest social studies/ language arts instructor Ron Hughes participate in reading assembly.

J. Ronald Hughes

has been a social studies/ language arts instructor at River Forest Junior-Senior High School in Hobart, Indiana, for twenty-nine years. He has served as chairman of the Social Studies and Foreign Language Departments. He has been a presenter for Outcome-Based Education and has been active in organizing reading programs at River Forest.

River Forest Junior High School is located in Lake County in northwestern Indiana. River Forest has a student population of 300 in grades 7-8. The geographical area served is basically a bedroom community in which parents and graduates must seek employment in the surrounding areas. The school offers a variety of convocations and assemblies to supplement the curriculum. Honors days, reading assemblies, career days, and peer tutoring encourage the students "to seize the moment."

River Valley Middle School



Eighth grade Math Team members celebrate winning a banner for fitting all of the pieces of the puzzle together in the Environmental Reading Challenge.

Reading: The First Piece of the Puzzle

Eden Kuhlenschmidt, Media Specialist

Putting together a jigsaw puzzle requires motivation and a puzzle to solve. Involving middle school students in reading requires building motivation and providing fun and exciting books. Reading: The First Piece of the Puzzle was developed to provide reading opportunities as well as reading materials. The multiple activities funded by the Middle Grades Reading Network were developed to meet the identified student reading needs of time, materials, and opportunity. The grant has provided the incentives to promote reading during the school day and funds for new books. Key elements of the project included the Reading Challenge Game, an elective reading class, sustained silent reading, and community readers.

As part of River Valley's annual Earth Awareness activities, the media center sponsored the Puzzle Game: An Environmental Reading Challenge. Students were involved in reading fiction and factual materials to earn points towards a team banner. Activities included individual reading, shared reading, and skits based on readings. Nine of the school's eleven teams completed all activities within the time frame and received a banner. The others completed all but two of the activities. The public library provided additional materials and support for the reading challenge. Skits written as part of the Puzzle Game were presented at a local mall's celebration of Earth Day. The Puzzle Game will be incorporated next year as an essential part of Earth Awareness events. Other environmental reading motivators included student-made bookmarks, teacher read-alouds, opportunities for students to recommend books to other students, rain forest read-a-thon, and a themed read-in.

Read Aloud, Read Along was a newly offered elective this year. Eighth graders were paired with Wilson Elementary students for a weekly read-aloud session. The Indiana Department of Education and the public library provided speakers and additional expertise to the two-week training period. Trips to the public library allowed students the time to select books. Teachers assessed improvements in the reading and writing skills of both groups of students during the course of the semester by checking student journals. In the journals the students recorded that it was a fun class and a worthwhile experience. One student wrote that all students should be required to take the class.

The cornerstone of any reading program is time

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for sustained silent reading. Students and staff were encouraged to read for pleasure during a school-wide weekly silent reading time. The reading time was integrated with a variety of theme days in order to motivate readers. The African-American Read-In has become an annual event at River Valley as most students read books by and about African-Americans. Other themed days included the topics of the environment and the presidential election. Readers' names were posted in the media center as an incentive, and teachers encouraged students to share their reading with friends. These activities proved so successful that they are now a permanent part of the curriculum.

Many community readers were involved in Read-Aloud Days. For example, Indiana Gas Company readers recently visited the school. The adult readers enjoyed the project and have continued to visit, read, and maintain ties with the assigned classes. More Read-Aloud Days have been scheduled for the fall months.

Teachers and parents also served as reading models. As participants in the Teachers Under Cover program, teachers kept personal reading materials on their desks. Teachers participated in read-aloud events and often allowed the students to select the books to be read. Parent volunteers were responsible for putting together incentives, handing out information sheets, and preparing additional materials. They supported reading-at-home activities and helped students with the Puzzle Game.

Unexpected benefits have resulted from Reading: The First Piece of the Puzzle. Because of the Puzzle Game, the community is more aware of students as environmental activists. The number of participants in the themed reading days has increased. The African-American Read-In doubled in size from 250 in 1992 to 575 in 1993. The community readers have developed stronger ties with River Valley students as a result of the Read-Aloud Days. More teachers are reading a wider variety of materials aloud to their classes as a result of the teacher in-service. Because of closer ties with the public library, the summer reading program will be publicized and encouraged by the school staff. Finally, there are 25 eighth graders who will continue to write to their younger book buddies and, as one student wrote, "encourage them to read, because the more you read, the smarter you get."

Eden Kuhlenschmidt

has been the media specialist at River Valley since January 1982. She believes that the media center has a part to play in every area of the building. An avid reader of mysteries, science fiction, and biography, she has had her own reading world widened through the various Middle Grades Reading projects her building has participated in.

Seventh grade students read under the Environmental Read-Aloud recognition wall.

River Valley Middle is located in Jeffersonville, Indiana, approximately eight miles from the Ohio River. The student population of 900 in grades 6-8 presents a cross section of society, with representatives coming from urban to rural homes. The school is especially proud of its award-winning special programs in fine arts, environmental awareness, and reading.

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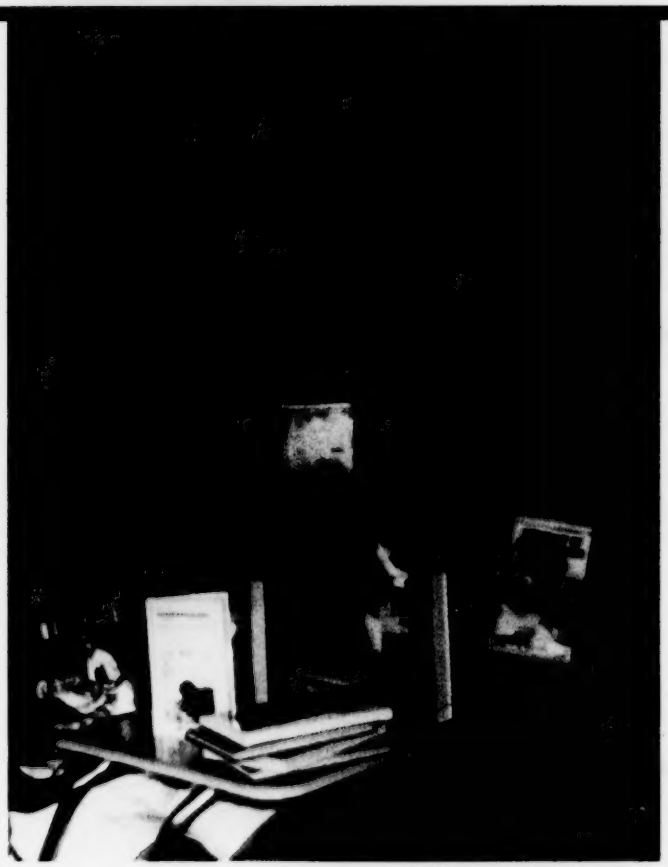


Jamie Ader, Larry Merchant, and Chandra Simpson select books for Secret Reading Buddies.

My Kingdom for a Book!

Linda Stalker, English Teacher

Books are magical kingdoms through which life passes like a flowing river. Its current takes the reader to unknown destinations and leaves him to explore and appreciate the beauties and mysteries of life. Often these kingdoms are opened by parents reading aloud a nighttime story to their youngster, but somewhere in upper elementary the emphasis on reading for enjoyment is stifled. Academics, extracurricular activities, and the myth of being too old to be read to throw up barriers to the enrichment of leisure reading. The Rockville Reading Network hopes to build a community of readers who share the enjoyment of books across the curriculum, thereby creating lifelong readers.

One problem a small school system has in developing cross-curriculum projects is the time to sit down as a group of teachers to brainstorm and develop activities. The Rockville Reading Network allowed language arts teachers Linda Stalker and Tisha Lohrmann, speech instructor Marie Vanada, teacher of child development Pam Butler, and media specialist Jana Crites to travel to Indianapolis to visit Kids Ink Children's Bookstore and Borders Book Shop. Owner of Kids Ink, Shirley Mowens, critiqued and suggested books for middle schoolers and young elementary students. The day had a two-fold purpose: to instill staff enthusiasm for the Rockville Reading Network and to begin the selection of materials.

Through enthusiasm and the selection of appropriate materials, adults and peers become effective role models and advocates of reading for pleasure. To become good role models, faculty members need to be motivated and refreshed by innovative reading ideas which may then be implemented in cross-curriculum planning. Rockville's Reading Network in-service for staff created an awareness of promoting reading when Linda Cornwell, reading consultant for the Department of Education, addressed the literacy problem, proposing that reading aloud enriches classroom learning experience. The staff in-service buffet and book and reading poster giveaways motivated staff to attend the workshop while Linda Cornwell planted creative ideas to incorporate oral reading in the classroom. Two days later, the eighth grade social studies teacher had his students choosing historical novels for a project. The eighth grade language arts teacher used a class period per week for six weeks for sustained silent reading. The Lilly grant afforded him the opportunity to order current young adolescent novels. There was no other money to be used to fund this worthwhile project.

Other significant projects are being planned as a result of this grant. In the fall of 1993, the Secret Reading Buddies project will begin. Junior high students,

freshmen volunteers, staff, and community people will take the names of literary and historical characters and will be assigned a partner. Each duo will read a young adolescent novel and, during the six weeks' period, will correspond with one another about the book. At the end of the project, each person will reveal his/her identity. In a peer teaching project, junior high volunteers will be mentored by sophomore speech students. These pupils will help prepare the younger students to read expressively to first graders. Mrs. Butler's child development class will select reading materials for the elementary students and then prepare enrichment activities for the picture books. Group collaboration will bring to fruition a successful cross-curriculum project.

Carrie Fredericks and Jesse Kirkpatrick practice reading aloud to elementary students.

The provision of funds through the Lilly Endowment grant has made these projects and the purchase of current adolescent literature possible. Gary Cowan, eighth grade language arts teacher, stated, "The new books we got were real attention-grabbers for the students." Because of the low economic status of many pupils, Rockville Reading Network developed projects that would impact the most students through a peer-group network and mentoring system that crosses age and curriculum boundaries, a process which also included community adults and staff. Staff development, sustained silent reading, Secret Reading Buddies, and cross-age read-alouds comprise the major programs in the Rockville Reading Network. We are building a community of readers who share and enjoy reading. By becoming role models, we are hopefully creating lifelong leisure readers out of our students while raising their self-esteem.

Linda Stalker

has served as a junior high English teacher for twenty years at Rockville Jr.-Sr. High School in Rockville, Indiana. She holds a master's degree in English and is certified in speech, drama, media, and library science. She has promoted reading at Rockville with the following programs funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.: Teachers Under Cover, Student-Operated Paperback Bookshop, and Rockville Reading Network.

Rockville Jr.-Sr. High School has a population of 400 students in grades 7-12. Situated in Covered Bridge Country, the school is located in Rockville, Indiana, a small farming community of 3,000. The Junior High Paperback Bookshop, the Academic Super Bowl, and the Hoosier Spell Bowl are extracurricular activities that the middle schoolers enjoy participating in.

Sarah Scott Middle School

Nicole Scurlock, Troy Chrisman, and Mandy Wood hold a picture of Sarah Scott and a Scottie dog signed by other members of their class.

Reading Across the Ages

Rebecca McElroy, Language Arts Teacher **Marty Willis**, LD Teacher
Ann Butwin, Language Arts Teacher

Part One

One activity that truly went "across the ages" involved a classroom project organized by a seventh grade teacher who began by contacting the activities director at a local retirement facility, Westminster Village. Residents of Westminster Village range in age from sixty-five to ninety-five, are active and in relatively good health, and live independently in private apartments. The activities director compiled a list of volunteers who were willing to be interviewed by a middle school-aged student. After receiving the list, the teacher assigned two students to each volunteer senior citizen and began preparing the students for the interviewing process.

Students compiled lists of questions and practiced interviewing each other in preparation for their visit to Westminster Village. For the actual interview, two students and one resident put their heads together for a full hour while the students asked questions and received a wide variety of fascinating responses.

Back in the classroom the students transcribed their notes and prepared a biography for the senior citizen they had interviewed. The students' finished products were hard-bound books containing the biographies they wrote which were presented to their respective residents on a return visit.

This experience afforded students the opportunity to spend time listening to the personal reminiscences of events they only read about in books while practicing their reading, writing, editing, and speaking skills. In addition, students experienced the personal joy and satisfaction of spending a little time with a generation far removed from their own, enabling them to gain some insight into the perspective of the elderly.

Part Two

The class was introduced to Foxfire in September 1993. They participated in the "Good Teacher-Good Learner" activity where they identified the qualities of both. A short history of Foxfire was given.

The class did many units utilizing the Foxfire approach. They chose what projects they'd do for the autobiography/biography unit after the "givens" were presented. They chose to do individual

projects such as personal histories, skits, and various presentations. They enjoyed making their own choices.

The next unit they tackled according to Foxfire was the parts of speech unit. The "givens" were presented by the teacher; the students were told what they were to accomplish by the end of the unit, and they decided upon the means. Each class chose a different method. The projects included The Game, Grammar Feud, The Word of the Day Calendar, Speech Puzzles With the Speech Team, and The Grammar News (video). The classes agreed that this was much more fun and educational than grammar in the traditional way.

The class didn't always do projects. They were often given choices on classroom management, book title selection, seating, and unit topics. With Foxfire, they had a much greater voice in the classroom.

With Foxfire, they had a much greater voice in the classroom.

Part Three

After "Foxfiring" Sarah Scott Middle School, the LD students made many trips to a local cemetery to visit and decorate the grave of the teacher for whom the school was named. This led to an interest in this historical cemetery, as well as a feeling of being "left out" on the part of the students who had not been involved in the Foxfire project.

The students were given a series of questions whose answers were found throughout the cemetery on the headstones. They answered the questions by making rubbings. Cash prizes of $5 were given in various categories.

The students were especially interested in the Hebrew inscriptions, and a local rabbi will interpret them for us this fall. The military graves were also of special interest since some of the graves date back to the Civil War.

We had a tour through the chapel with its crypt room, unique architecture, and stained glass. The kids were quiet and respectful. Many students asked if we could make this an annual trip.

After eating at Pizza Hut, we went to Dobb's Park. We had a tour of the nature center, and the guide answered many questions. Students handled the smaller animals. A frightening but harmless snake was handled by a few brave souls. We played softball, went on hikes, and played Frisbee until we reluctantly came back to school. The kids were perfect and so was the weather--a perfect day.

Rebecca McElroy

is a seventh grade English teacher at Sarah Scott Middle School and has taught in Clay and Vigo Counties for twenty years. She was a 1991 winner of the Excellence in Teaching Award, a Lilly Endowment grant recipient for reading and writing in the content areas called Project Rewind, and Junior Division Coordinator for the Indiana Academic Competition for Excellence (IACE).

Marty Willis

started the LD program at Sarah Scott nearly fifteen years ago. Prior to teaching at Sarah Scott, she taught at Chauncey Rose Junior High and taught regular elementary in the Chicago area for ten years before specializing in the LD elementary field. She has been awarded Teacher of the Year and Outstanding Young Educator. She has a B. S. and M. A. from Indiana State University.

Ann Butwin

is in her fourth year of teaching language arts at Sarah Scott Middle School. She received her B.S. in 1982 from Indiana State University. She has participated in and presented workshops on reading and has been active with the Foxfire approach.

Sarah Scott Middle School has a student population of nearly 500 in grades 6-8 and is organized around a family concept with each sixth, seventh, and eighth grader assigned to a family of 150-175 students and an interdisciplinary team of teachers. The grade-level teams utilize flexible scheduling and teaming to meet the individual interests and needs of their students.

Sarah Scott is part of many grants and projects. They include Project Co Teach (inclusion of special education), Indiana School Guidance and Counseling Leadership Grant, Reading Across the Ages, Project Geo, and The Buddy System.

South Side Middle School

Students from reading teams maintain the G.E.A.R. road to reading success by adding a new "shoe" for every book read at South Side Middle School. Our 513 students far surpassed the 4000-book goal by reading 4839 books during the 1992-1993 school year. Pictured are Donald Richardson, Natalie Workman, J.R. Welch, and Dani Malone.

Formula for Creating and Feeding a Growing Reading Monster!

Vickie Thomas, Media Specialist **Karen Sipes**, Language Arts Teacher
Amy Dishman, Reading Teacher **Kathy Closter**, Public Librarian

South Side Middle School is an inner-city school of 647 seventh and eighth graders located in Anderson, Indiana. Almost 40 percent of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch. The school's reading motivation program reaches out to a diverse population ranging from gifted and talented students to mildly and mentally handicapped and hearing-impaired students. South Side is also known for its scholastic chess program which qualifies for the National Junior Chess Tournament each year.

Today, Audrey II, a split-leaf philodendron (Philodendron cordatum), looms over the desk of the South Side Middle School Media Center. Students named the plant Audrey II after attending a dress rehearsal of **Little Shop of Horrors** at the local community theatre. The students at our middle school are beginning to remind us of the bloodthirsty plant who constantly demanded, "Feeeeed me!" Like Audrey II, our student body's hunger for books grows larger each year. Unlike Audrey's caretaker in the play, we are thrilled to nurture this growth in our school!

What is the formula for creating this monster? There are four key ingredients.

- **Media Specialist**
- **Language Arts Teacher**
- **Reading Teacher**
- **Public Librarian**

Here are our individual perspectives.

The Media Specialist

Our program has emerged since 1987 when I discovered Electronic Bookshelf, a computer-managed reading motivation program, and started a school-wide incentive to motivate students to read. Assessment data showed a decided deficiency in reading skill, as well as negative attitudes toward reading. Twenty-eight percent of the students participated in Electronic Bookshelf that first year. However, our language arts faculty gave 100 percent support to the idea. Each year I expanded the Electronic Bookshelf and saw other reading opportunities "crop up" in the building. I suggested we could be more effective in improving student reading skills and attitudes if we could connect all of these reading incentives into one focused program. Suddenly the "I" in reading motivation became the "we": the language arts teacher, the reading teacher, the public librarian, and the media specialist.

We participated in SOAR (Stimulating Opportunities for Adolescents to Read) during the summer of 1991. This eight-day program provided us with the time and resources to develop G.E.A.R. (Get Excited About Reading). G.E.A.R. was designed with Electronic Bookshelf as its foundation to give students time to read during school. It features a monthly lunch-discussion program, generates reading excitement through faculty skits, sets an annual all-school reading goal, provides a reading celebration day at the end of the year, coordinates a buddy program with the adjoining elementary school, integrates storytelling and book talking, and educates the community as to adolescent literary needs. In our design, we also stress the importance of teachers as reading role models and prepare presentations for faculty meetings on reading aloud, sustained silent reading, and using novels and picture books in the middle school classroom. In the fall of 1993 we will add more components to the program--parents and community as reading partners.

The main element in unleashing this reading monster has been the broadening of ownership of the reading motivation program to include the faculty, students, and the public library. Although four people drive G.E.A.R., they utilize broad-based team planning to design and implement G.E.A.R. activities.

We have created a genuine enthusiasm for reading at South Side. This year 92 percent of our student body participated in G.E.A.R. Lilly grant money has provided desperately needed financial nourishment to feed our reading monster.

The Language Arts Teacher

During my ten years of teaching, I found my students' lack of interest in reading frustrating. They needed more involvement with books. I wanted my students to have a love for literature. I introduced adolescent novels into my curriculum to engage students in the activity of reading. Later, I found a grant opportunity which called for proposals from teachers in the language arts department for collaborating together to examine the ways we used reading in our curricula. After obtaining the grant, we developed a program called "Read 'N' Feed." Six teachers and the media specialist committed to reading the same five novels and then met at a restaurant to discuss over dinner how the books might be used in our classrooms.

Read 'N' Feed was expanded to include students. Once a month, students were invited to read a common title and were asked to discuss the book during lunch time. Local restaurants donated lunches in support of the program. These social experiences have proven to be quite popular in generating reading excitement.

Other programs which contributed to our success were Teachers Under Cover, Student-Operated Paperback Bookshop, and Reading for Real. But programs alone cannot build the hunger for reading we seek. What really works is having a **group** of educators and community leaders who have the vision to make adolescent readers into adult readers.

The Reading Teacher

During the summer of 1991, I participated in the SOAR program. That was the catalyst for our building which fine-tuned our reading motivation program. During that eight-day experience we asked ourselves, "What can we do to excite our students to read?" The dialogue and ideas expanded over the next two years. Today we consider our program a success because of the commitment of our G.E.A.R. team. South Side students like to read. It is cool to read at South Side. We have turned the students on to good books. We challenged them to read 2000 books in 1992. They read 3000. The goal for 1993 was set at 4000. They read 4839. Those numbers speak for themselves.

G.E.A.R. is a success due to the dedication of the G.E.A.R. team and the support we receive from administration, faculty, and community businesses.

The Public Librarian

Like many public libraries, our resources and services are under-utilized by middle grade students. A partnership with the local schools was the best answer to our need to increase students' library awareness and information literacy. This partnership has expanded our ability to promote the value of libraries to lifelong learning by increasing our access to this age group. Cooperative planning has given us more information about young adult needs, information which we use to improve our services. The opportunity for librarians to share ideas and receive programming support is essential for the library to accomplish its educational mission in the community.

Caveat: Until key people in your school become as excited as you are about getting kids excited about reading, nothing much will happen. As a result of the grant, our school will never be the same. G.E.A.R participants have become a group with a common purpose, and our base continues to grow as we invite more and more to become a part of our community of readers.

Vickie Thomas

media specialist at South Side Middle School in Anderson, Indiana, for sixteen years (B.S. in science education, M.L.S., Ball State University).

Karen Sipes

South Side Middle School teacher since 1975 (B.A., Anderson University; M.A., B.S.U., in English with concentration in adolescent literature).

Amy Dishman

South Side Middle School reading teacher (B.S., elementary education, reading endorsement, Texas Christian University; M.A., B.S.U., in educational administration).

Kathy Closter

Anderson public librarian (B.A., Miami of Ohio; M.L.S., Indiana University).

Switzerland County Junior-Senior High School

Students of all ages enjoy picture books! Christina Fletcher, Rachel Craig, Jeremy Hankinson, Amanda Huttsel, Heather Thomas, and Randy Leap.

EAGER Readers

Ginny Reeves, Media Specialist

Middle school students at Switzerland County Jr.-Sr. High School in rural Vevay, Indiana, are participating in a program entitled Project EAGER (Environmental Activities Generate Eager Readers) which was funded by a Lilly Endowment Inc. Middle Grades Reading Network grant.

A national survey indicates that the environment is the favorite cause of 75 percent of young people. Project EAGER was developed to make reading enjoyable as students learn environmental science using a variety of new books which were purchased with grant funds. Activities are provided to supplement student reading of outstanding fiction, poetry, biographies, careers, art, and science books that are rich in environmental concepts, strong story lines, and universal appeal.

Through hands-on activities, students are experiencing how the scientific process works and how scientists form and test conclusions. Journal writing, sustained silent reading, storytelling, reading aloud, and art are some of the activities used to encourage reading for learning and pleasure in the science curriculum and to encourage environmental stewardship values.

Read Aloud Often

Picture books, as well as other stories, can be used by all age groups for reading aloud. **Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A Message from Chief Seattle**, with paintings by Susan Jeffers, has a powerful environmental message: "In our zeal to build and possess, we may lose all that we have." Byrd Baylor's **I'm in Charge of Celebrations** is a wonderful book to read aloud and to introduce students to journal writing. Students then write essays in their journals describing their own celebration of nature.

Journal Writing

A wildlife journal is an excellent means of helping students develop their writing and art talents, as well as their ability to observe events as scientists do. Sam Fadala's **Basic Projects in Wildlife Watching** is a must to help students learn about wild birds and animals through their own firsthand experiences. Equipment, methods and procedures, recordable observations, the results of the project, and a conclusion are given.

Robert Bateman: An Artist in Nature by Bateman is breathtaking and a motivator for the most

reluctant student! His animals look like they may step off the page to say hello. **The Plant Compendium, A Definitive Volume of More Than 2,400 Copyright-Free Engravings**, edited by Jim Harter, is an extraordinary source for illustrating journals. This book provides fine engravings of a great selection of plant species of the late Victorian period. Decorative borders and motifs of plants are included.

Students may wish to take nature photographs for their journals. Vicki Cobb's **Natural Wonder** describes scientific application of photography. **Think Like an Eagle: At Work with a Wildlife Photographer** by Kathryn Lasky follows photographer Jack Swedberg through a cycle of seasons as he tracks wildlife in three very different regions of the United States. **Whitetail Country** by Daniel J. Cox has over 150 color photographs of white-tailed deer, which may be used for an example.

Art

Mary Ann Kohl and Cindy Gainer's **Good Earth Art: Environmental Art for Kids** and Gwen Diehn and Terry Krautwurst's **Nature Crafts for Kids** provide instructions for using leaves, flowers, and twigs to make craft projects.

Incorporate Humor

Readers will smile or laugh out loud at Gary Larson's **Wildlife Preserves: A Far Side Collection** or **The Lorax** by Dr. Seuss.

Include Stories and Poetry

A Zooful of Animals, selected by William Cole; **The Night of the Whippoorwill: Poems**, selected by Nancy Larrick; and **Birds, Beasts and Fishes: A Selection of Animal Poems**, selected by Anne Carter, are lavishly illustrated anthologies of nature poems. **Talking to the Sun: An Illustrated Anthology of Poems for Young People**, selected by Kenneth Koch and Kate Farrell, has poems from various time periods and many countries that are illustrated with reproductions of art works from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

All students read the modern classic **Where the Red Fern Grows** by Wilson Rawls, the story of two dogs and a boy.

Biographies and Autobiographies

Biographies and autobiographies provide role models of people who have taken an active role in preserving the environment. **Rachel Carson: The Environmental Movement** by John Henricksson, **Jane Goodall: Friend of the Chimps** by Eileen Lucas, and **John Muir: Saving the Wilderness** by Corinne Naden are good examples. For students who would like information on how they may also pursue a career in the outdoors, **Opportunities in Environmental Careers** by Odom Fanning and **Careers for Nature Lovers and Other Outdoor Types** by Louise Miller are available.

Celebrate

A field trip to a museum or zoo is an excellent way for students to see collections or animals exhibited in environments like their natural ones. Two books to assist in planning are **Animals and the New Zoos** by Patricia Curtis and **Where to Find Dinosaurs Today** by Daniel and Susan Cohen.

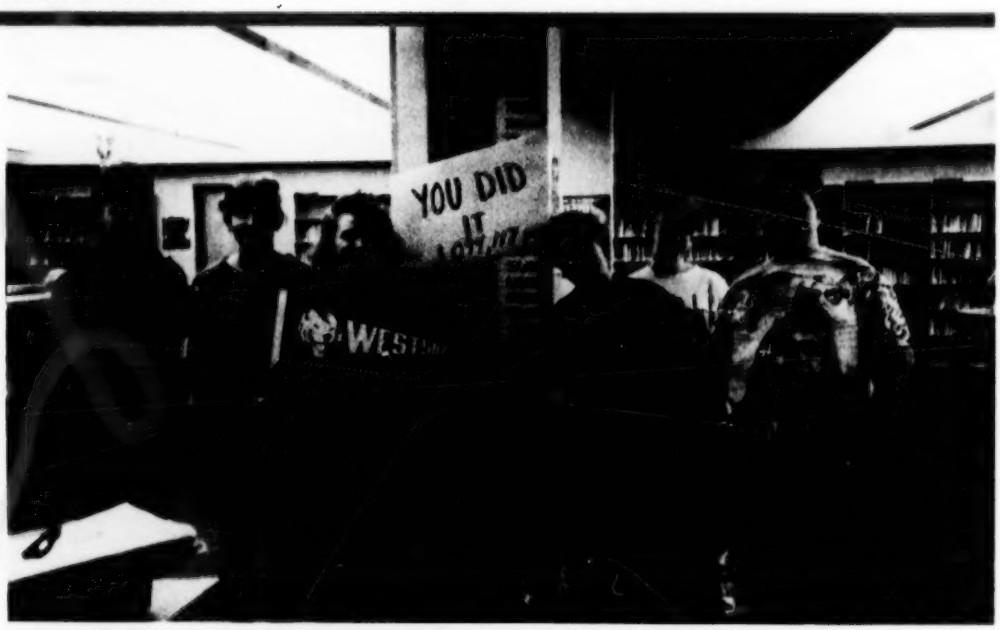
Teachers in rural schools have unique opportunities in their locale to promote readily available natural material outside the nearest door and incorporate visually appealing books to keep science and reading linked all year. The outdoors and the exploration of nature uplift the spirit and encourage a discovery approach to learning. Students have expressed wonder, delight, and enlightenment with the books to enhance their science classes.

> "We travel together, passengers on a little spaceship...."
>
> Adlai Stevenson

Ginny Reeves

has served as media specialist at Switzerland County Jr.-Sr. High School for the past twenty-two years. She is presently serving as president of the Switzerland County Public Library Board, is past president of the Southeastern Indiana Area Library Services, is a member of the Joining Forces Team for Media Specialists, and is a member of the Indiana "Reading Day" Committee. She has written grants and led workshops that promote youth participation in school and public libraries.

Switzerland County Jr.-Sr. High School has 275 students in grades 7 and 8. Situated in a beautiful rural area in Vevay, Indiana, the school serves students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, with many from disadvantaged homes. Reading becomes a celebration in our reading incentive program for eighth graders and in a nine-week reading motivation class for seventh graders.



At the end of the 1992-1993 school year, the students at West Side Middle School had achieved their goal: they had read one million pages ***and more****!*

From left to right the top six readers in the school: Jennie Farrough, Angie Simmons, Misty Pappas, Daniel Brunson, Aimee Green, and Eric Nord.

Readers Are Winners

Diana Tice, English Teacher

There was a spirit of celebration at West Side Middle School on Friday, May 21, 1993. With the encouragement of their teachers and parents, the kids had won the Going for a Million contest! In fact, they had exceeded their goal of reading a million pages. They had read 1,094,117 pages, and Mr. C., their vice-principal, was sitting on the roof of the school where he was interviewed by a radio station and a TV station during the course of the day. All of this reinforced the ideas that reading was important and the kids' achievement was important! On Friday, May 21, 1993, the kids at West Side knew they were winners!

At the end of the 1992 school year, the story about reading at West Side was a very different one. The library was often an empty room, and everyone on the staff knew the kids didn't read enough. They didn't read enough to develop their reading skills or build their vocabulary.

Part of the solution to the problem was the establishment of a reading contest. In September 1992 the staff challenged the student body to read a million pages by the end of the school year, which averaged out to 1,600 pages per student. The vice-principal, Mr. Cripliver, offered to perform a "spectacular stunt" if the student body achieved its goal, and the students suggested "stunts" Mr. Cripliver could perform. A list was developed, and the kids voted for their choice: Mr. C. would sit on the roof of the school for an entire school day, "come rain or come shine."

There were small prizes to keep the kids focused on the goal of a minimum 1,600 pages per student: a certificate and a pencil to acknowledge 500 pages completed, a certificate and a cookie for 1,000, and a certificate and a shake for 1,600. At the end of the year, everyone who had read a total of 1,600 pages would be invited to hear Hoosier storyteller Steve Etheridge.

To ensure that the kids would respond to the challenge of reaching higher like the proverbial climber of mountains, there were special prizes for the most voracious readers at the end of the year. The top six readers in the entire school received free magazine subscriptions of their choice, and they were invited to have lunch with Mr. Etheridge when he was at West Side. Along with the other seventeen top readers who read over 7,000 pages, they received "Super Reader" T-shirts. In addition, thirty-five students received a paperback from the school's bookshop or a coupon for one free pan pizza from a local Pizza Hut; they were

the lucky winners of a random drawing from the names of all the students who had read 1,600 pages (approximately one-third of the student body).

During the course of the contest, two problems emerged. Students were to list the books and pages they had read on an honor system in notebooks designated for that purpose in the school library. Since West Side is organized in a "block system," each of the six blocks had a "Block Book" in which to record its pages. Within the first month of the contest, it became obvious that many students were reading (circulation was up in the library), but they were not recording the pages they had read. The members of the English Department agreed to keep the "Block Books" in their classrooms and to occasionally circulate them during class time. The problem was solved.

> . . . the staff challenged the student body to read a million pages by the end of the school year, which averaged out to 1,600 pages per student.

The second problem to surface was the fact that students were not required to produce any concrete evidence that they had understood or thought about what they had read. The solution to this problem will be forthcoming in the 1993-1994 school year when West Side will use the Accelerated Reader program as the basis for its reading contest. The Accelerated Reader is a computerized program that requires that students answer questions about what they read before they receive points for reading it. In voting to use part of West Side's ISTEP incentive money to purchase Accelerated Reader, West Side's staff has displayed a very genuine, active support of the reading program.

This active support has been in evidence ever since teachers were asked if they would allot one class period to quiet sustained reading in their elective classes each week and read with their students. Ninety-five percent of them said "Yes," and DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) Days came into being. Four days a week, teachers and students have read together at West Side, and when the school library closed for inventory this spring, a few teachers opted to continue DEAR Days. "I'll read to my kids," one of them said. A number of them have indicated they had found DEAR Days to be beneficial to their students and very enjoyable and rewarding for themselves. They hope it will continue next year. It will!

Also to be continued next year is "going out to lunch!" Members of TUC (Teachers Under Cover) volunteered to meet with students who wanted to discuss what they had been reading, and the members of the English Department agreed to give extra credit to students who "went out to lunch." There were always a few students who wanted to "go out to lunch," a number of whom were kids often lost in the crowd in middle school. As one member of TUC put it, "'Going out to lunch' gave them a way to connect."

Another opportunity for people to connect through West Side's reading program will occur when Parents Sharing Books pilots at the opening of the 1993-1994 school year. A number of parents and kids are looking forward to reading the same books and discussing them with each other. Originally, Parents Sharing Books was to be incorporated into West Side's reading program during the 1992-1993 school year, but as the year progressed, it became evident that there was not enough time to adequately prepare and organize. The coming summer will provide the necessary time to do a quality job.

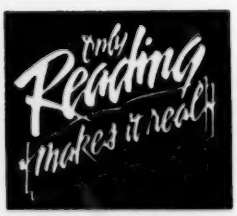
Going for a Million, Going Out to Lunch, DEAR Days, the Accelerated Reader, Parents Sharing Books--the reading program at West Side is an ongoing process, and everyone involved in the program is a winner!

Diana Tice

has taught English at West Side Middle School for the past eighteen years. During her tenure at West Side, she has worked with a variety of students including the learning disabled and the gifted. She has also initiated and developed several programs that enrich the educational process at West Side: the Multicultural Program, the International Dinner, the Mentorship Program, and the Reading Program. As she sees it, though, her most important responsibility is touching the lives of kids in a positive manner each day.

West Side Middle School has a student population of 630 in grades 7 and 8. Located in Elkhart, Indiana, it serves students from a variety of economic and cultural backgrounds. In an effort to better serve the needs of all its students, the West Side staff has become involved in TREK, and everyone is looking forward to further growth in the 1993-1994 school year.

Minigrant Site Map



MIDDLE GRADES READING NETWORK
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